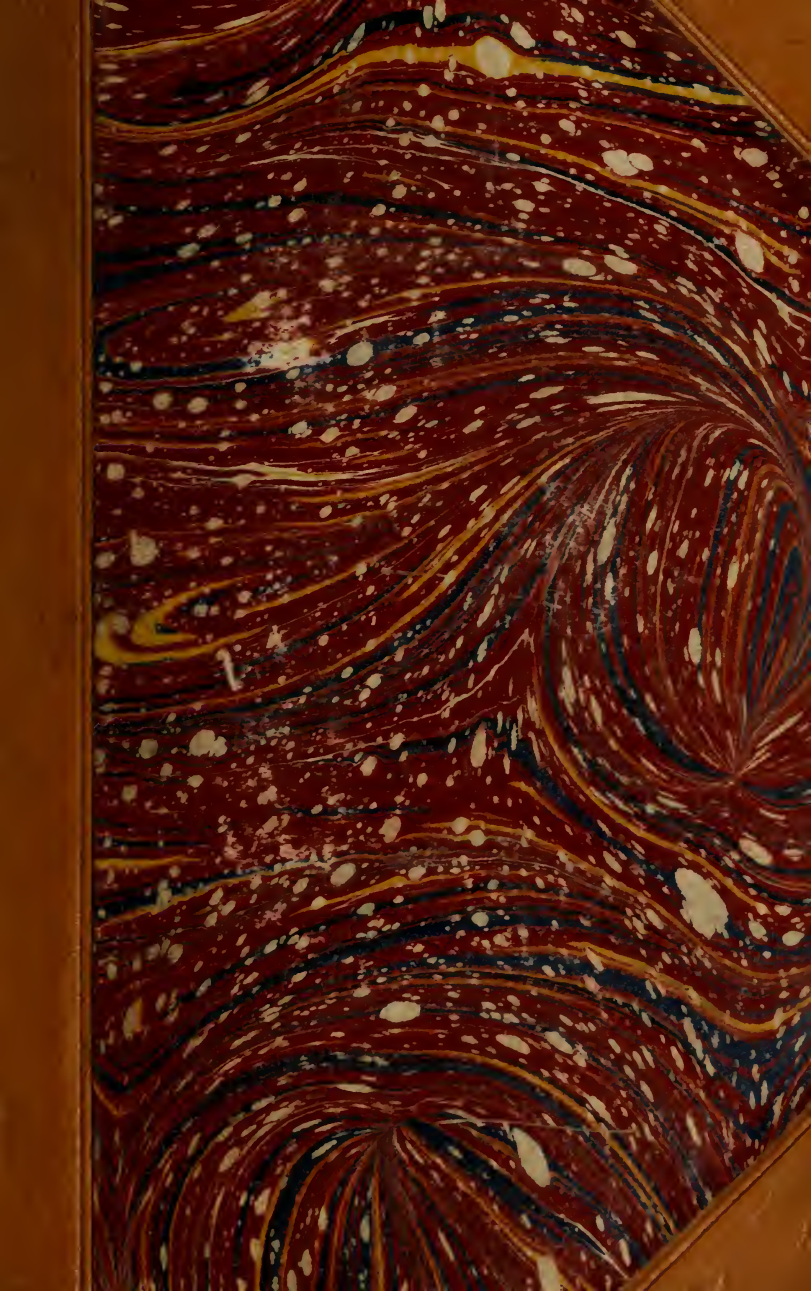
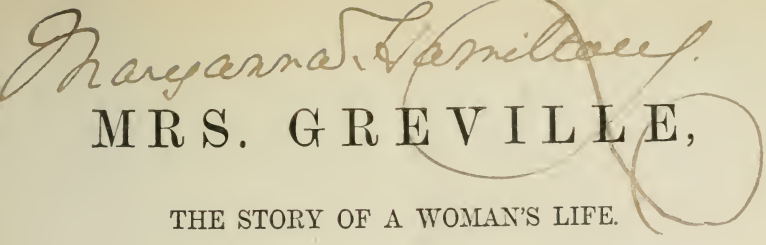


LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS
823
Ur8m
v.2

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/mrsgrevillestory02ursu



MRS. GREVILLE,

THE STORY OF A WOMAN'S LIFE.

TOLD BY

URSULA,

A SOMEWHILE SISTER OF MERCY.

"Ask what is human life? . . . .
A painful passage o'er a restless flood,
A vain pursuit of fugitive false good,
A scene of fancied bliss and heart-felt care."

COWPER.

"Mon avis est qu'on ne peut créer des personnages que lorsque l'on a beaucoup étudié les hommes, comme on ne peut parler une langue qu'a la condition de l'avoir sérieusement apprise. Ainsi je me contente de raconter."—DUMAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1874.

[*All rights reserved.*]

823
Ur8m
v. 2

MRS. GREVILLE.

CHAPTER I.

"She thought upon the subject twice or thrice
And morally decided, the best state is
For morals, marriage; and this question carried,
She seriously advised him to get married."

BYRON.

"The first sure symptom of a mind in health,
Is rest of heart and pleasure felt at home."

YOUNG.

THE Duchess of Montserrat sat in her boudoir, and her son—the elegant, idle, extravagant Lord Plantagenet Fitz-Henry, the terror of Belgravian mothers and the delight of their daughters—was extended full length on the blue silk sofa, alternately teasing and petting a beautiful King Charles' spaniel that now snarled in anger, now barked in delight.

"My dear Plan, I do wish that you would leave off teasing that poor dog, and listen to me," said her grace, half pettishly.

"'To hear is to obey,'" replied his lordship. "Who says that? Shakespeare, I suppose: he says most things."

"The line is from the 'Bride of Abydos,'" said the duchess, who piqued herself on the accuracy of her quotations.

"Fido, do you hear that? Now get down, you little brute," said Lord Plantagenet, dropping the spaniel on the floor. "Now, mother," he continued, returning to his recumbent attitude and crossing his arms under his head, "I am all attention, so fire away—I mean, speak out the maternal counsels," he corrected. "Who is it that I am *not* to flirt with, and who is it that I *am* to flirt with, or rather go in for? That's about the mark of most motherly counsels, I apprehend."

Some recollections here came over him; for suddenly rousing himself, he threw himself with a jerk into a sitting posture, placing his feet on the floor instead of on the silken couch, and, shaking with laughter, exclaimed,

"Such a joke! enough to kill one! Only fancy, one of our fellows was persuaded to enter for the heavy stakes—that is to say, his

affectionate mamma begged and implored him to marry and settle—not that the two are by any means necessarily contingencies. Why, the fastest fellows I know——"

"I will not have such immoral sentiments uttered in my presence," said the duchess, gravely, "and by my son too."

"Well," continued he, "you know—or rather you *don't* know—what a wild fellow Markham is. He listened with filial obedience, got some one to introduce him to that fat old woman, what's-his-name the brewer's widow, called next day and proposed to her, and by George! she accepted him," and Lord Plantagenet fairly screamed with laughter as he rolled back on the sofa.

"It was a very foolish thing to do, but I suppose that Mr. Markham did not anticipate a refusal?"

"Anticipate a refusal!" repeated her son, convulsed. "*Of course* he did. You should have seen him, mother; fancy Bob in a regular fix, the very personification of despair, asking pitifully, 'Do you think I shall be obliged to marry her?' It was killing."

"It think it was a very foolish, ill-bred joke, and I am surprised that you should have the bad taste to laugh at it," rejoined her grace.

"But think of the woman! Poor Bob!"

"And who is the—the—lady?" hesitated the duchess.

"The—the—lady," imitated her son, "is not one you would speak to. I expect your grace would call her that 'very vulgar woman,' if by any chance you were to meet her. She is a fat old body with heaps of tin, and gives suppers down at Fulham."

"My dear boy," said his mother, horrified, "surely you do not go to such places as *that?*"

"I don't think it answers to ask where men go, mother," replied "my dear boy;" "but don't agitate yourself; beyond the old lady's vulgarity there's no harm in her. *She* don't ask them, it is her son, a fellow in the Hussars; not a bad fellow either. They call him Treble X. Come here, Fido," he continued, whistling to the spaniel now safely ensconced in its mistress's lap.

Fido turned its great dreamy eyes on him, and nestled more closely among the velvet folds of her grace's dress, and went to sleep again.

Lord Plantagenet sat up. He knew that his mother had something to say to him, and that she would say it sooner or later; so he waited with exemplary patience till she thought

fit to begin, beguiling the time by attentively listening to the click of his watch, which, his arms resting on his knees, he was deliberately opening and shutting.

The duchess found it difficult to begin. The story of the brewer's widow and her son's hilarity thereat, had discomfited her, and spoilt in her mind's eye the effect of the speech which she had arranged for his benefit; not that she feared that *her* son would turn her counsels into ridicule, as Mr. Markham had done by his mother's; still the effect intended was marred: she wanted to get him in a soft mood, for she feared that Mrs. Greville was hardly the woman to captivate one who avowedly said that fast married women were the only ones worth talking to, except one or two awfully jolly girls he knew, and besides these being his usual sentiments Lord Plantagenet seemed in a more than usually reckless frame of mind.

"I say, mother, if this frost continues, I shall go to Mowbray's, unless you particularly want me."

"Well, I do very particularly want you,' said the duchess, with a pleasant smile; "your father and Hurst have delayed their return, and I am expecting people to-morrow."

"Any one I know," asked her son, indifferently.

The duchess mentioned a few names, adding, "I have also asked a lady I met at Beaumanoir, widow of a man I used to know in old days. She is a very charming woman."

"A case of a rich old widow, mother?" said her son, looking up mischievously.

"Not the least, my dear. Mrs. Greville, though certainly rich, is very young and very lovely, with a voice that would make her fortune on the stage."

"A paragon!" quoth his lordship.

"You need not speak so ironically! she is a well-born woman, a Gaveston—and her mother belonged to one of the noblest houses in Rome."

"Ah! I remember now. Bob Markham—it seems his fate to be smitten with widows—raved about a lovely young creature he met at Okehampton's, on whom he had been composing what he called extempore epitaphs. So you have invited this bewitching creature for my benefit?"

"Don't flatter yourself. I doubt if Mrs. Greville will even look at you," retorted her grace.

Lord Plantagenet rose and lazily surveyed himself in the glass.

"H—m. Women *have* told me I wasn't very bad-looking, and 'exceedingly like the dear duchess.'"

The "dear duchess" looked at her handsome boy and smiled, and with playful irony quoted—

> "'A combination and a form indeed
> Where every god did set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man.'"

"I'm off after that, mother," said he, suddenly, and stalking out of the room.

The duchess was nearer the mark than she either knew or intended, when she said that Mrs. Greville would not look at her son.

Eveline regarded him as a handsome, good-tempered boy, an opinion that would have slightly disgusted him and his twenty-two years, had he known it.

If the Duchess of Montserrat had merely worldly considerations in view when she invited Eveline to Rossmoor, they completely gave way to those of sincere affection as they became better acquainted; and she watched with much satisfaction the pleasure that her son evidently took in Mrs. Greville's society. Having no sisters of his own, he had never seen women in all the grace and tenderness of

home life; and many a morning was now spent in his mother's boudoir, where he always found Eveline singing, drawing, or chatting with her.

It came about in this wise.

Sauntering into that sanctum one day, he found Mrs. Greville trying over some old Jacobite songs; his Scotch heart warming to the theme, he began whistling them for her, while she played the accompaniment.

"How beautifully you whistle," said she, honestly.

"Do I?" said he, pleased.

And so he came the next day, till it became the regular thing for him to join them before luncheon.

The duchess was too wise to make any remark, but she contrived to throw them together as much as possible, putting Eveline under his especial charge in the sleighing or skating expeditions, a charge to which he was by no means averse, and the fascinating courtesy, a manner peculiarly her own, with which she naturally accepted every kindly attention, added no little to his pleasure; in short, matters seemed so satisfactory, that the duchess, in writing to her husband, mentioned "the lovely Mrs. Greville" in the warmest

terms, saying, "She is really like a daughter to me, and makes me feel more than ever what a charm such a daughter would have shed over our home. Plantagenet seems much taken with her, and I sometimes think that this happiness may be accorded us. You, my dear duke, will be delighted with her."

When the duke received this epistle, he handed it over to his eldest son, who was with him, remarking:

"Your mother is deep in match-making. I wonder what sort of woman this is. I don't quite fancy Plan marrying a widow."

To which Lord Hurstmonceaux replied:

"If my mother approves, you need have no fears. No one is so fastidious about women as she is. She is a good judge, too."

"I believe you are right," quoth his grace, "and marriage would steady Plan."

Utterly unconscious of the great destiny awaiting her, Eveline was easily induced to prolong her visit at Rossmoor, for she had learnt to love the duchess very dearly, and the quiet days that she passed with her were among the happiest she had known for years.

The duchess was a charming woman to those she liked, and she had become so fond

of her guest that she really treated her like a daughter—so everything went smoothly.

During this time Eveline had had more than one letter from Vandeleur; his excuse for his first letter was, that a friend of his had a charming house in Lowndes Square, which he was anxious to part with—the very thing for her, &c., &c.—but the matter of the house took up a very small portion of a very long letter. She consulted the duchess about the house, and found her a warm advocate of Mr. Vandeleur's advice.

In due time she answered his letter, and then ensued a swift and very regular correspondence. Vandeleur wrote especially well, and rather prided himself on his epistolary compositions. His letters touched Eveline. There was a humility, a striving after better things, "in the hope," he wrote, "of being more worthy of the dear privilege which she had accorded him of her friendship—a friendship which he felt would make him a better man," that could not fail to fascinate one, who, like most of her sex, love to think that through their influence a man is made better, holier, happier.

"I want to know what keeps you all this time at Rossmoor," wrote Pamela, "and with

the usual discrimination of my sex, suspect a man, but cannot conceive *who*. The duke and Lord Hurst are away, the delightful Plantagenet is on duty at Windsor, and the duchess is far too proper to have any one very nice staying there in her husband's absence, and your letters lead me to believe that you are actually alone with her grace save for the orthodox 'come, stop, and go' visit of a few uninteresting neighbours.

"There must be more than meets the eye; for though you are very charming, my dear, I never knew the duchess do anything without a motive; and if all this is really out of affection for you, I shall like her grace ten times better than I did before. She is about the best woman I know, but so much perfection is dreadfully dull.

"We are going on here much as usual.

"People come and go, and so relieve the tedium which otherwise must fall on this devoted house, considering there are three sets of lovers in it, for Florence Kinnaird has come back. She wished to share the *éclat* of the 'double wedding in high life'—as the *Morning Post* will describe it — doubtless thinking that some reflected glory will thereby accrue to her. Were I her, I should prefer a

quiet wedding in my own village ; but *chacun à son goût*.

"Mr. Twyrrhitt is spoony as only an old man can be. How long it will last is behind the veil of futurity; meanwhile his *fiancée* behaves with immense tact, and he loads her with presents, is wretched out of her sight, and my lady-mother, with her unbounded good nature, asks him here perpetually, an attention that I fancy Miss Kinnaird would easily dispense with.

"Gwen keeps her dark lover in great order, and rarely allows him the felicity of being with her. She says that he is perfectly content. I suppose it will all turn out right.

"I can fancy you, with your romantic notions, looking back to see if you have not missed some mention of Gaveston ; but what can I say ? We have known each other from our babyhood, no doubt squabbled over the same sugar-plum, and had other delightful incidents of that charming age. He is a dear good fellow, and I am very fond of him.

"Mr. Vandeleur has paid us another visit. His chief topic of conversation was you—your beauty—fascination — talent, &c.—in fact he could talk of nothing else.

"Don't forget, amid the delights of Ross-

moor, that you are expected here for the double event.

"The Wilson has gone. Again—beware of her. That woman is treacherous.

"Make a thousand polite speeches for me.

"Thine,

"PAMELA."

To this off-hand epistle Eveline answered :

"I see you are as sceptical as ever; and were I inclined to preach, or you to listen, perhaps I should read you a homily on the subject.

"You need not look aghast and run your eye rapidly over the pages for rocks ahead. To lecture you would be *peine perdue*. You are too great an infidel in the creed of Eros.

"I am alone with the duchess, and, laugh as you will, I have rarely enjoyed anything more than my visit to her. I do not think that you do her justice. I dare say that the artificial life people lead in the world does not tend to develop the affections; there is not time; but just now there is nothing beyond her home to occupy her, and she is what I believe to be her natural self, and a very charming self it is. Lord Plantagenet spent a fortnight here. He is very handsome,

quite aware of it, and often amused me by the open admiration that he bestowed on himself in the numerous mirrors that meet one at every turn in this house. He seems a good-natured boy, but rather belies the axiom of sons inheriting their mothers' talent, for she is a very clever woman.

"I see that you still keep to your old opinion of Miss Wilson. What harm can she do me? and wherefore? She must see that I have no wish to take *ce cher* Digby from her.

"The life here is—do not laugh—*pleasingly* monotonous; one day telleth another, but they pass like 'waves of the summer,' sunny, tranquil, and genial. The duchess has her schools, in which she takes much interest; she calls on the tenants; looks after the sick—poor there are none—at least not such poverty as one sees in Wales; then what with talking—of which we do a great deal—music, letter-writing—the duchess has an immense correspondence—the day is gone. Nothing can be more kind and sympathising than her manner among the poor; but I *do* wonder at the county neighbours calling. She is not rude; I do not think that she could be rude, but while intensely civil, Juno herself on the top of Olympus could not regard

mortals with more *insouciance* than does her grace of Montserrat the 'small fry' about here. I told her so one day, after some really very vulgar people had been calling (you see we are on frank terms), and asked why she received them. If you had seen her! A disdainful smile from the haughty queen as she said with superb contempt, '*Noblesse oblige!*' It was inimitable in its perfect genuineness. I should never enact the *grande dame* properly, so it is fortunate I am not called to that walk of life; I should disgrace my class. People I did not like, I would not know; for I very much fear that I could never be so excruciatingly civil if compelled to meet them; and yet these people upon whom she tramples so imperially, seem to like it, for I actually heard one talk of the 'dear duchess;' the said dear duchess not even deigning to profane the tips of her aristocratic fingers by such plebeian contact as that of the said lady's fat hand.

"I have heard from Mr. Vandeleur several times. He writes such charming letters, full of deep, keen feeling. I am anxious to know his wife. I may be wrong, I hope I am, but I do not fancy that he is quite happy at home. It is sad to think that one so capable of warm

affections, and of such a kindly nature, should meet with so little sympathy where he has the best right to seek it.

"He has not said this to me; I simply infer it from a sad, mournful tone that runs through his letters, and which seems to escape him unawares.

"I am looking forward to spending a few last days with you, so tell me when I may come.

"I return home next week, as the duchess is going into waiting."

CHAPTER II.

"Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway
That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey."

GAY and brilliant had been the weddings at Beaumanoir. The happy couples, laden with youth, beauty, health, and all the goods of this world, had departed for the continent—Beaumanoir looked dull—the Easter recess was over, and London was filling fast.

Mrs. Greville and Vandeleur had again met at the Okehamptons', a meeting which had still further cemented their friendship; and the continuance of their correspondence showed each other more of their feelings on all sorts of subjects than years of casual intercourse would have done. People are so much more communicative on paper than in speech,

so that when they met in London they met on very intimate terms, on the footing of old and fast friends, and they discoursed *vivâ voce* the themes that had filled their letters—friendship, love, sympathy, tastes. Dangerous themes under the circumstances; for though Eveline Greville's heart was as pure as a child's, yet it was instinct with the dormant strength of twenty-five years, and warm with the intense passionate nature that she inherited with her Italian blood.

God help her if she should ever learn to love him between whom and herself lay a barrier worse than death. God help her, indeed, for she was not one of those to whom love is a passing fancy. To such a nature as hers it is life of life, the keynote which once struck vibrates through existence for evermore.

Many may say that no one need yield to the fascinations of love where such is forbidden; but alas!

"Is human love the growth of human will?"

Did the shipwrecked mariner willingly steer for those rocks on to whose pointed, jagged surface his bark was dashed to pieces? Long before he saw them, the current had taken so firm a hold on his vessel, that she was beyond

his power of governing her ; and what else is the heart but a frail bark on the terrible sea of feeling, caught by currents and dashed on rocks of passion before the helmsman even sees breakers ahead ?

Mrs. Greville was waiting in her hotel for Vandeleur to escort her to the house that he had chosen for her. She had left off her deep mourning, and she looked very lovely in the gray silk dress with black trimmings which she had on that day. Sunshine was in her face, and sunshine was in her heart, for this new friendship was giving a very great interest to her life.

I think it is Lord Lytton who says that "there is an order of female beauty which at first strikes back and rebukes every grosser instinct—a beauty in which men clothe their idea of a soul that has entered heaven."

I quote from memory, so the words may not be correct, but the spirit is, for when I read them they brought to my mind the almost angelic beauty of Eveline Greville—a loveliness that Raphael would have revelled in as a prototype for the Virgin Mother—and whatever feelings may have arisen in Vandeleur's breast, they were certainly struck back by the purity of heart and thought and man-

ner in the beautiful woman who had enthralled him. He could not by any possibility misinterpret her, and though she greeted him cordially and affectionately, it was with that cordiality and affection which no man but a coxcomb ever mistakes. After some lighter talk he led the conversation to the charms of friendship, descanting so eloquently on the happiness which hers had conferred on him, and of the ennobling power it had over him, that Mrs. Greville, lifting her great eyes in wondering sorrow to his, said—

"Are you not happy then at home?"

She spoke hesitatingly, for Vandeleur had often told her that he adored his wife—that his respect and admiration for her were immense—and it seemed impossible to her that his wife could fail to love him, yet strange that he should care so much for the friendship of another woman. It did not occur to her that a man could speak in such glowing terms of his wife, when there was not one bond of sympathy existing between them.

"I ought to be, for there is not a better woman in the world than my wife," he replied, "but I am not worthy of her, we do not understand each other, and the sympathy that makes life so delicious has not fallen to my lot."

"Don't you think that it is a little your fault, for where a woman loves it needs so little to call forth her sympathy?" said Eveline, in gentle reproof.

"Very likely; indeed I take all the blame on myself; but there it is—we don't get on."

"Hush, hush! for God's sake do not say that," said Eveline, shocked.

"I suppose I ought not to say so," replied Vandeleur, "but you do not know how hard it is for a man, however much his wife may love him—and I believe my wife adores me—to find that no thought, feeling, or taste ever meets a response. I have yearned for a sister's sympathy more than any words of mine can tell. Eveline, dear Eveline!" he continued, suddenly turning round, and taking both her hands—"may I call you so?—will you be that sister to me? Believe me, your friendship will make me a better man in every way."

And before she could answer a word he bent over her and kissed her forehead, but the next moment he started to his feet and walked hastily to the window, and suggested that it would be as well to go and see the house.

"I will meet you there," he added, taking up his hat, and abruptly leaving the room.

Mrs. Greville little guessed the tumult that had arisen in his bosom; and though half vexed, half shy, at his having touched her forehead with his lips, she could not help laughing at the discourtesy with which he had left her; nor did she guess the anxiety with which he was waiting in Lowndes Square, wondering whether she was offended past redemption.

However, the sight of the lovely little face, smiling out of a gray tulle bonnet, as her brougham drove up, quickly assured him that his offence was pardoned. They went over the house, which, perfect of its kind, was newly decorated and furnished with so much taste, that Eveline, looking round, exclaimed, "What an extraordinary thing to take all this trouble about a house only to sell it!"

I think she would hardly have taken the house had she known that the care had been bestowed by loving hands for one, who, after all, needed but a very small home—some three feet by five—and that the sorrowing bridegroom was only too glad to find a purchaser for a house he could not bear to look at.

So wags the world; one reaps from another's sorrow—one laughs while another weeps—alike ignorant of the joys and griefs that

hover close around, unknown, unthought of; yet contributing to the daily life of each. Perfect as was the house, had it been the dreariest place, methinks that these two would still have deemed it a paradise, for

> "When we live in a bright-beaming world of our own,
> And the light that surrounds us is all from within,"

all things are flooded by that inner sunshine, than which no brighter ever came from the heavens, even on the brightest day of June.

The house was at last exhausted, even to the kitchens, where Eveline ran with childish glee, followed by Vandeleur, thereby thoroughly convincing the old Scotchwoman who was in charge that they were either a newly-married couple, or about to become so; for she said to him—fortunately or unfortunately, as the reader may deem it—out of Eveline's hearing,

"It is a vara prit-ty house, an ye'll bring a bonnie bride to it, I'm thinking, sir."

Vandeleur laughed, tossed half-a sovereign to the woman, and hurried Eveline into her carriage.

They drove to the house-agent, and thence to the National Gallery, where they spent some time; she absorbed by the pictures, he

by her, and when he put her into her carriage he asked leave to go and see her after dinner, "he was in town *en garçon*, might he come?"

"Certainly you may," she answered cordially; "I was thinking how dull I should be at the hotel without books or music."

He watched her carriage out of sight, then strolled on to his club.

Mrs. Greville was very tired when she reached her hotel, and lying down on the sofa tried to reduce into something like order all that she had seen that day; but picture after picture rose in a blended mass before her, mixed up with houses, furniture—one face showing amongst it all, till the kaleidoscope faded away, and she slept profoundly, nor did she wake till her maid roused her to dress for dinner.

"Dinner, Jones? Have I been sleeping?" she asked, with the usual incredulity of having done such a thing in abnormal hours.

"Dear me, yes, ma'am, for better than two hours," replied the Abigail, ruthlessly lighting all the candles in the room, thereby causing her mistress to blink her eyes very considerably; "it is past seven."

"You must make me pretty to-night, Jones," said her mistress, as the former was

combing out her long curls; "I have a visitor coming."

Jones had been with her since her birth, and was a privileged person.

"I don't think that would be very difficult, ma'am; indeed they were saying downstairs —there are some high families in the house— and the Countess's maid—she is French—saw you going down stairs, and she says she never saw such a *bell* and *distingay* lady, and she asked me if you were eighteen."

"That will do, Jones, I do not care to hear what they say down stairs."

"Well, you really *do* do credit to me," said Jones, putting the finishing touch to her toilette. "You look what the French call *ravissang*."

She did indeed look very charming in the demie-toilette of gray muslin and lace that her milliner had just sent her, and so Vandeleur thought as, before half-past eight, he was ushered into her presence.

What a quiet, happy evening they spent! and how, in after times, did the memory of it come back to Eveline—come back with a miserable pang, to think that such days had not lasted for ever!

Books, travels, countries were discussed,

but the more dangerous topics of the morning were avoided.

"Do you know that I have taken Mr. Owen's fishing?" said Vandeleur, as he was going.

"You don't say so?" exclaimed Eveline. "Where do you intend to live?"

"At the inn," said he.

"All very well for a man," rejoined Eveline; "but Mrs. Vandeleur will find it very uncomfortable. If I have not the pleasure of knowing her before you go, you must persuade her to waive ceremony and come to me—she will be wretchedly uncomfortable at that little inn."

"I will give her your kind message if she comes with me, but she never, or very rarely accompanies me on my fishing and shooting expeditions—she has so many duties to attend to at home; but I am looking forward to your becoming acquainted this season. Are you going down to-morrow?"

"By-the-way," exclaimed Mrs. Greville, "I forgot to tell you, Lady Okehampton is so lonely without her daughters that she has asked me to stay with her a little while—in short, till Miss Wilson can come to her."

"And shall you?" said he, re-seating himself.

"They come up to-morrow, and I meet them at Grosvenor Square," said Eveline.

"And how long shall you stay?" asked he, thinking of his fishing, which would be worthless to him without Eveline; but this he kept to himself.

"About a fortnight, I suppose; anyhow, till Miss Wilson comes," she answered.

"What on earth *can* Lady Okehampton see in that most disagreeable woman?" asked Vandeleur. "Surely, there are pleasanter companions to be found if she wants one."

"Miss Wilson seems to have affronted you," said Eveline, smiling at his warmth.

"Could anything be in worse taste," he replied, "than her sitting behind the curtain, that last morning at Beaumanoir, listening?"

"Chut! don't say that," said Mrs. Greville, reprovingly.

"Well, I am not apt to be hard on women," rejoined the other, "but I do think that sitting there listening—yes, listening—was a most unjustifiable piece of impertinence and gross ill-breeding."

"But, after all, the library is a public room,

and she had a perfect right to be there," suggested Eveline.

"Do you think that I would have spoken of myself—my inner feelings—my home—before *her*, had I known it? Surely, you feel that some topics are too sacred to be discussed before all the world."

His aggrieved tone melted her at once.

"Indeed, I do," she said, with charming sweetness, and holding out her hand as a peace-offering; "only I do not like to think that a lady can be guilty of listening intentionally to a conversation not meant for her ears."

He held her hand very closely, and murmured something which sounded extremely like "dearest," but Mrs. Greville did not hear it.

"You really took me in when you spoke to her. I thought that you must have seen her all the time. What a hypocrite you are!" she said, archly.

"I flatter myself that I did that rather well. I hope that I took her in, but I doubt it; she is not like you—guileless and innocent."

"How do you know that I am?" laughed Mrs. Greville, and drawing her hand from his

clasp: "I may be a 'whited sepulchre,' for aught you know."

He looked at her tenderly, and shook his head, saying,

"There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple."

"There's nothing left of to-night," replied she, laughing; "hark! the clocks are striking twelve—I really must send you away."

"Shall I see you to-morrow?"

"Certainly. Here, if you come before two; after that, at the Okehamptons'. Good-night, and don't dream of Miss Wilson."

CHAPTER III.

"The million flit as gay
As if created only like the fly,
That spreads his motley wings in the eye of noon,
To sport his season and be seen no more."

COWPER.

"THIS is really kind of you, dear Mrs. Greville," said Lady Okehampton, cordially, as Eveline was announced, next day. "I am so lost without my girls. I heard from Pamela this morning; they seem to be enjoying themselves very much in Paris, and they talk of meeting Gwen and Humphrey at Baden, soon. She desires me to give her love to you, and to say she is going to write."

"Ah! delighted to see you," said Lord Okehampton, coming in and shaking hands with his pretty guest. "My dear"—this to his wife—"I have asked one or two men I saw at the Club to dine here to-night. You must send out cards for some dinner-parties while

Mrs. Greville is with us. Here's a letter from Lorton" (he was the eldest son, then travelling in America), "we shall have him home in three weeks, you see—not transformed into a Yankee, I hope. I hear Montserrat has returned, I am going to call there; can I do anything for you?"

"Is the duchess in town?"

"No, I fancy not."

"Dear Mrs. Greville," said Lady Okehampton, in a piteous voice, when Eveline, having divested herself of her bonnet and cloak, returned to the drawing-room, "will you make out some cards for me? I suppose mothers ought to rejoice when their daughters marry, but it is a terrible loss; my girls always made out the cards, and arranged everything."

"Well," replied Eveline, cheerfully, "with your visiting list, and a little help from you, I shall perhaps be able to manage it."

"Thank you so much; that is so kind, we can do it after dinner, and if I do go to sleep you will not mind, will you? A railway is so tiring."

The "one or two" men whom Lord Okehampton had asked, turned out to be some half-dozen, as Eveline discovered when she entered the drawing-room. Her host

named one or two to her, and dinner being announced took her downstairs.

The dinner was very pleasant, and Lady Okehampton, generally too indolent to talk, was quite lively and agreeable, and keen about the gossip of the day; but the effort had its reaction. After dinner, comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair, her feet on the fender stool, a screen in her hand, she began going over her visiting list with Eveline; here and there giving an amusing anecdote as a name struck her.

All went smoothly at first, but presently the combined effects of fire and railway proved too much for her, and after giving a few of the wildest answers, her ladyship's head sank back on the well-cushioned chair, and a gentle—

"Oh, call it by some other name"

than snore, denoted that she slumbered.

Eveline took up a book, but her thoughts wandered far away, chiefly to her future life in London, and she asked herself if she had been wise in giving up her quiet life in Wales, to encounter the bustle and turmoil of society; and the dread growing with the thought, she decided that she had been very impulsive.

Reverie and slumber were alike broken, by the gentlemen coming into the drawing-room.

Lady Okehampton opened her eyes, and tried to look wide awake, and, to prove that she had never been to sleep, smiled on all around with the complacent, inane smile peculiar to people under such circumstances.

"Lord Okehampton, I bought a house this morning," said Eveline.

"You came up yesterday, and bought a house to-day? What an impulsive being you are! And where is it?"

"That is exactly what I have been saying to myself," said Eveline, answering his second exclamation, which tallied so completely with her own feelings.

"Oh! a castle in the air?" rejoined the other, laughing, "nothing very serious after all."

"Not at all in the air; but very much in Lowndes Square; but like the man who got in the balloon, I am rather afraid of what I have done."

"What number is it?" asked one of the guests. "I know Ashton has a house there he wants to sell."

"No. 0, is that his?"

"Precisely. He was going to be married, in fact had been engaged a long time," continued the speaker, carefully sugaring his coffee, "but the girl died of consumption a few days before the marriage. A little more sugar, if you please,"—this to the footman.

"Oh! I am so sorry you told me," exclaimed Eveline. "I wondered why it was so beautifully furnished, and this accounts for it. I shall have no pleasure in it now."

"Why should you not benefit by it, as well as any one else?" asked Mr. Temple, sipping his coffee.

"Because it is very painful to know we are owing our pleasures to the misery of others," said Eveline, a little disgusted.

"It is the kindest thing for Ashton, any way, and somebody must have it, for *he* will never live there."

"I don't believe it ever answers to speculate or moralize on these matters," said another; "where one man wins, another loses; but I don't fancy it troubles him much. By the way, Okehampton, did you hear that last night there was very high play at ——, and Archer lost a hatful of money; he can ill afford it, I fancy."

"Very ill, indeed," said Lord Okehampton.

"Vandeleur behaved in the most generous way to him last year—he is a relation of his wife's, you know; he lost a very heavy sum and Vandeleur payed it, on his promising never to touch cards or dice again. He will be very much annoyed at this."

Delighted to hear this kindly trait in her friend, a trait which confirmed all the good she believed of him, Eveline listened, in the hope that more would be said; but as every one did not look on Vandeleur as a little god, the subject dropped, and turned to the more interesting one of the coming Derby.

The next evening they went to the Opera, to hear the divine Grisi, silent—alas! that it should be so—for ever now.

The appearance of the beautiful stranger, with the splendid diamonds, in Lady Okehampton's box excited a good deal of speculation. Many a lorgnon was fixed on her, and the verdict was highly favourable. She was "somebody" evidently, and as soon as the first act was over, the box was besieged by men anxious to have a nearer look at the new beauty.

"Who the deuce is she?" asked one of the men in the Guards' box.

"I can tell you," said Devereux, with his

languid drawl. "I met her down in the country, she's a little widow with lots of tin."

"Any drawbacks? one might go in for her, you know—sweet cherubs? jointure? that sort of thing?"

"Not a bit of it. All her own. Bred as Eclipse. Proud as Lucifer. Here's Markham"—as the door opened—"ask him. He has made his reputation as a poet, writing sonnets to her eyebrow."

"Hullo, Markham, in for widows again?" chaffed a friend, as he came in.

"Hang widows! Don't speak of them," said he, testily.

"Poor fellow! it must be a sore subject," said the other, laughing; "but you wouldn't hang anything as pretty as that, would you?"

No sooner did our old acquaintance Bob see Mrs. Greville, than uttering "By George!" he darted out of the box, and in a few minutes was shaking hands with her. His friends laughed.

"Hit in that quarter. Any chance?"

"None," said Devereux, who, by virtue of his few days' acquaintance, imagined that he knew all about her—"none; women *do* take queer fancies sometimes, but I don't think she'll take to Markham."

"How is it she never showed before?" "Where has she sprung from?" "She knows people, too; she and Van seem old friends." "There's the Plantagenet shaking hands with her." "Where does she hail from?" were the questions which assailed Devereux, when it was seen that he was personally acquainted with the charming widow in question.

"From Wales," responded he, "where she has been doing a little private suttee without the fire. Husband—weeds—weeping—that kind of thing. How splendidly she is singing to-night." This last referred to Grisi.

Utterly unconscious of the interest that she was creating, Eveline gave herself up to the enjoyment of the music. Every sense merged in that of hearing, she sat entranced, while the tears stole down her cheeks.

"How you love music," said Vandeleur, when he was taking her downstairs.

"I do, indeed; and yet the pleasure it produces amounts to pain sometimes. You must have thought me very childish, but all my sympathy was aroused for poor Norma."

"In spite of her fault?" asked Vandeleur, in a voice only meant to reach her ear.

"Alas! poor Norma!" replied the other,

with the pity a truly pure woman never fears to evince for a suffering sinner.

"Lady Okehampton's carriage!" was here shouted; and as they hurriedly struggled through the crush, Vandeleur asked if she should be at home after church to-morrow.

The carriage was up—impatient policemen waiting to send it on—Lady Okehampton and Eveline were hurried in—the door banged to—and Vandeleur only read his answer in her face.

"Going to the Opera is the easiest way of telling people one is in town," said Lady Okehampton, settling herself in a corner of the carriage. It was too dark for her to see the amused look on her companion's face at this, to her, novel way of regarding such music as they had just heard.

"You looked very pretty, my dear. I foresee a great many visitors to-morrow, to *call* on me, but to see you."

As Lady Okehampton prophesied, her drawing-room was crowded the next day. The fame of her beautiful and wealthy Italian cousin had already gone abroad, and many were the visitors who sought an introduction.

Anxious that she should be well launched on the waves of London society, Lady Oke-

hampton organised a set of charming little dinners, where the guests—few and choice—made society a real pleasure, and not a penalty as it often is.

Young, beautiful, and rich, the world was at Eveline's feet, and life was very pleasant to her; but she never thought of asking herself how much of her happiness was due to Vandeleur, whom, either at home or abroad, she rarely failed of meeting, at all events, once in the day. He surrounded her with a thousand little cares—those nameless nothings which individually seem scarce worth mentioning, but which so plainly show that the one woman's pleasure is tenderly cared for, and that the thought of her is seldom out of the man's mind.

And how about Mrs. Vandeleur all this time?

Mrs. Vandeleur was still in the country, happily ignorant of her lord's amusements; but the day came for her arrival, and on the following one she dined at the Okehamptons.

Oddly enough, for a woman, Eveline had asked no questions about Mrs. Vandeleur's personal appearance, and she was considerably taken aback when she saw that lady enter the drawing-room on her husband's arm.

A tall, gaunt woman, looking years older than her fair-haired *débonnair* spouse—one of those women who never look young—who seem to have been born old—with black hair, black eyes, black dress, a black mass which somewhat cruelly contrasted her sallow complexion and thin, bloodless lips. Her unbending, hard nature could be read at a glance—nothing soft or feminine there.

"*That* his wife?" was Eveline's mental ejaculation. "Impossible!"

But it was very possible: she was the veritable wife *in propriâ personâ*, and before Mrs. Greville had rallied from her surprise, she found herself being introduced and making civil speeches about the pleasure, &c., &c.

A stiff curtsey—Mrs. Vandeleur always curtseyed—and Mrs. Greville's outstretched but unheeded hand fell by her side. Half ready to cry, but very indignant, she haughtily said, "That having heard so much of her, she had forgotten they were strangers."

Mrs. Vandeleur gazed coldly at her while she was speaking, and without further notice turned to speak to some men near her.

The colour mantled in Mrs. Greville's cheek, and every whit as cold and proud, but far more civil—it was not in her nature to be

discourteous—she looked at her in amazement, and very haughtily turned away.

All, save the husband, were too much engrossed to notice this little scene, but he jealously watched the result of this first meeting. He gnawed his moustache with vexation: what else could he do? He saw that they were enemies at first sight, and too late recognised his mistake in having so warmly praised to his wife a woman with whom he wished to see her friends.

"What are you looking so intent about?" asked Lord Okehampton. "You look as if you had lost something."

"I have both lost and found," replied Eveline, quickly recovering herself. "I have lost an illusion and found a puzzle."

"You are disappointed in our friend's wife," said her host, with a quaint look at her.

"A strangely incongruous couple, apparently. Is she agreeable?"

"She is clever," he replied, shortly.

The Duchess of Montserrat here approached with her husband, whom she wished to introduce to Eveline. A tall, fine-looking man, with keen eyes, not unlike a Scotch terrier's, which looked her over in a moment—as she

felt. The look satisfied him that his wife's taste was, as usual, unerring.

He spoke to her very civilly about what he called her kindness to the duchess in his absence.

Eveline looked up, and fairly laughed—a frank laugh which made them friends at once.

"Your grace is pleased to be merry," said she; "the duchess was very kind to *me*, and I spent a very pleasant time at Rossmoor."

Vandeleur came up to shake hands with the duke, while Eveline went over to the sofa whence the duchess was signing to her.

"We have a few people to-morrow night; are you disengaged?"

"Yes, and delighted; for the Okehamptons dine out to-morrow."

"And not you? No? Then I shall expect you to dinner."

"Duchess, do you know Mrs. Vandeleur?"

"Certainly, I know her."

"Is she shy, or bad-mannered, or what?"

"Neither one nor the other, that I know of; but very wooden. *I* do not care for her, but she is an excellent woman."

Vandeleur never once approached Eveline, who, thinking that he was vexed with her for her cold reception of his wife, after all her pro-

fessions of wishing to know her, determined to make one more effort to thaw that block of ice; so, stopping by her side, on her way to the piano, Eveline asked her if she were fond of music, and if there were anything she would like her to sing.

Mrs. Vandeleur waited with an icy demeanour, impossible to mistake, till the other had finished, and then,

"Thank you. I do not care for music," was the frigid answer.

"Don't waste your smiles on that odious woman," said Mr. Lovell, a good-looking Guardsman who, a few days before, had fallen desperately in love with Mrs. Greville at first sight; "bestow them where they will be appreciated."

"Why do you call her odious?" retorted Mrs. Greville. "I am told she is excellent."

"Heaven preserve me from such excellence!" exclaimed Frank Lovell. "Conceive having such a finger-post always before one, pointing the way to go! Poor Van, he's awfully depressed when his wife's with him, and no wonder."

He was standing near his wife, and talking to a lady next her; but there was nothing to denote any particular depression about him;

and so Mrs. Greville remarked to Mr. Lovell.

"Yes, but look at the lady he is talking to!" said he, lightly, "even Mrs. Vandeleur could not be jealous of anything so old; besides, she is Mrs. Vandeleur's own mother. Will you sing once more?"

Mrs. Greville went to the piano, and when next she looked round, the Vandeleurs had gone.

"Have you known Mrs. Vandeleur long?" asked she of Lady Okehampton, when she was alone with her host and hostess, after the departure of the last guest, "and do you like her?"

"Yes, I have known her a long time, and I suppose I like her. She is an excellent woman."

"Well, she *need* be; for she is the most odious, ill-bred woman I ever had the ill-luck to meet," said Mrs. Greville, emphatically.

"Well done!" laughed Lord Okehampton, "I did not think that those little lips could be so vehement. She has not a good manner; but there are two sides to every question."

"Very likely; but nothing can excuse incivility. I have no doubt that she is excellent,

since you all say so; but for my part I confess that an unpolished diamond has no charm for me. Poor Mr. Vandeleur! no wonder that he is so often from home."

"Take care, my young friend," said Lord Okehampton, good-naturedly, and laying a warning hand on her shoulder, "take care how you pity a man for his domestic troubles, and, believe me, Vandeleur is not unhappy."

CHAPTER IV.

"How many heavy hours
Those childish creatures know:
How much of sorrow and restraint
They to their elders owe."

ANON.

ON the following morning she was walking in the Row with the Lorton children and their governess, when Mr. Vandeleur joined them.

Mrs. Greville was at first inclined to retaliate on him, not only his wife's impertinence, but also his own studied neglect of herself on the previous evening; but his warm hand-clasp, and his evident pleasure in seeing her, disarmed her at once.

"How good and kind you were last night," said he, walking by her side, and falling a little behind the children. "I saw it all, and was more distressed than I can say."

The deprecatory tone in his voice melted all her anger, and Eveline looked up.

"I did so hope to see you become friends," he pursued. "I suppose it was not to be. You are not angry with me?"

"With you?—oh, no! nor with her, now. I am only very sorry, for I, too, had reckoned on our friendship. Why does she dislike me?"

"She can't dislike you, indeed, I know that she does not; but she is very peculiar. You see now that my home is not a paradise on earth," he cried bitterly.

"Hush! hush! do not say that."

"Ah! well, do not let us talk of it; but you can understand now, Eveline, dear Eveline, how very precious your friendship is to me: you will accord it me, will you not? And will you let me be your friend, your counsellor—one you will confide in? Ere long you will give that right to some one else, but till then, let no one be your friend but me."

He spoke vehemently and passionately.

"What do you mean, and why are you so unlike yourself?" asked Eveline, gently.

The grave tone in which she spoke recalled him to his senses, and he made some remark about the universal homage that was paid her. She interrupted him with a light laugh,

so frank and merry that the gloom on his face cleared up like mist beneath sunshine.

"I am so glad to hear you laugh like that," said he. "It shows that you are still heart-whole"—though he said this lightly, he could not conceal a certain wistfulness in his voice. "If you would be happier, God knows I would rejoice; but I do so dread your marrying a man who may be unworthy of you."

"Pray do not talk of my marrying," she answered, gently, "I have no such thoughts."

"And yet you will be much sought after," said Vandeleur sighing.

"Evy! Evy! Mademoiselle says that we may go to Kensington Gardens, if you will come," cried the children, rushing back to her.

"Come along, then," she replied, taking Laura's hand, and keeping her with her.

"I dare say you will find my children there," said Vandeleur.

"Oh, I hate your children," exclaimed the little Lortons, with the *brutale franchise* of childhood; "they won't play, nor run, and they slap."

What more crimes might have been divulged had not Mrs. Greville stopped their disclosures, is impossible to say; but when she saw the objects of their aversion, she was

not surprised at their vehemently expressed dislike.

Three pale children — old-looking, old-fashioned, sickly little things, prim in manner, and prim in dress—were slowly walking up the gravelled walk : the eldest about eleven, the youngest scarcely five, and in this one alone did some of the light of childhood still linger. This latter broke loose from the nurse directly she saw her father, and ran up to him. He caught her in his arms and tossed her in the air, a bright colour coming into her face at the rare enjoyment.

"Oh ! it is so nice, papa. Again ! Again !"

The governess, an elderly, starched female, here interposed. She was very sorry, but Mrs. Vandeleur's orders were very particular —she liked the children to be quiet.

The two others came up looking precociously grave at the daring disobedience of orders ; and the little Lortons "scenting the battle," rushed up to see the result.

Vandeleur looked excessively annoyed, put the child down—she was crying now, poor little thing—and turned away.

"I think you are a nasty, cross old woman," said the eldest Lorton to the governess, aware that the sting "old" would carry home.

"I sink so, too," lisped a little rosy romp, the youngest of the Lortons, and coming to the rescue; "my lord tosses me, and I lets him, and I likes it," she added, in defiance of all grammar, nodding her little head, and looking excessively like Pamela.

"Papa always plays with us, and mademoiselle never prevents him, do you, mademoiselle? You are a cross old thing!" exclaimed the first speaker, beginning with much dignity, but indignation getting the better of her—not to be allowed to play with her own father indeed!—ending in sad commonplace.

"Come along, Laura; come, baby," said the one who had been looking on silently, "come and race, and leave those cross creatures alone."

Off they started, the little Vandeleurs looking for a moment as if they intended to follow, but, too well trained to obedience, gave up the rebellious thought, and continued their solemn pacing.

Right glad was Eveline to find that Vandeleur had gone. The scene had been so painful, so humiliating, that all Lord Okehampton's warning went to the winds, and from the bottom of her heart she pitied him, and more than ever disliked that "excellent

woman," the mother of those wretched little children.

What would she have said, could she have been present at their dinner?

It was almost the only time that Vandeleur saw his children, so he rarely failed of being present.

"Well, little one," said he, patting her head, "none the worse for the toss, eh? Here is something to keep you good," giving her a parcel.

"I expect Helen to be good without being bribed," said Mrs. Vandeleur, in her "Hannah More" tones.

"Mayn't I have it, mamma?" asked the child, her lip trembling, but still busily pulling the paper off the doll. "Oh, what a beautiful baby!"

"It is not a baby; it is nothing but wax," said another child, a precocious little being of eight.

"It's *my* baby, and I love it," cried Helen, passionately.

"Helen," said her mother, in freezing tones, "give me that doll; instead of making you good, it makes you naughty;" and the precious baby was taken from her.

The child made a piteous face, all ready for

LIBRARY

a howl, which came forth on hearing her father say,

"Come, come, Sarah. I gave it her—let her have it. You won't cry, will you, Nelly?"

"N—n—o," sobbed she.

"Miss Frost, will you be good enough to take Helen upstairs? Till you learn to be good, you will not be allowed to come down to dinner." And the child, sobbing more than ever, was carried away.

"It is very sad to see how passionate Helen is," severely said Mrs. Vandeleur.

"The child would be good enough if you would leave her alone," said her husband, excessively annoyed.

She did not answer—a dark look came over her face; but her father and mother entering the room at that moment, the subject was diverted.

There was improving conversation for the children, who answered difficult questions with a promptness that made one's heart ache, but which gratified their mother; and when luncheon was over, she gave the doll to the second child, telling the eldest that she was too old for such nonsense.

Vandeleur, more angry than he cared to show, was leaving the room.

"Will you step into the library one moment?" said his wife.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, as soon as the door was shut.

"I really must beg of you, Henry, not to interfere with my system with the children. Nothing can be worse than bribing a child to be good. You see the effect it had."

"I am not sure that it was the child's fault," said he.

"That means, of course, it was mine; and I saw that you did not like my giving that toy to Letitia."

"If you ask me, I did not," said Vandeleur, keeping his temper; "and moreover, I think it was unfair and unjust."

"I am sorry you should say so. A mother is not likely to be either to her children. They must learn to bear disappointments with equanimity. Plenty will await them hereafter. I have learnt *that* lesson."

"I am not aware of any disappointments that you have. What has happened?"

"You might second me with the children for one thing, and not blame me before them, whatever you may do when we are alone."

"I have never blamed you, that I know of.

Come, Sarah, do not lose your temper like this—let us live peaceably."

"*I* have no other wish," she said, icily; and laying the tips of her nerveless fingers in the hand he held out, "*I* give *you* no cause for annoyance."

"I never said that you did; I don't know anyone who fulfils her duties more faithfully."

"I am glad that you can accord me *that* justice. I wish you could do me as much in other things."

"What on earth are you driving at?" cried Vandeleur, his patience coming to an end.

"Nothing," she replied, in a voice that said "everything."

"Then in heaven's name, what *is* the matter?"

"Nothing," she replied.

So he left the room.

And that evening, when he met Eveline at the Duchess of Montserrat's—so gentle, so cheerful, so feminine—her kind eyes meeting his with such unwonted pity—you may be sure that it did not detract from her charm.

"What a flirt that Mrs. Greville is," said a lady; "she knows how to use her eyes."

"Such eyes ought to be used," said Frank Lovell, overhearing the remark, and ready to

take up the gauntlet at once. "I never saw any half as lovely, or half as truthful."

"Ready to break a lance as usual?" said the lady. "What a pity tournaments are out of date."

"*You* don't lose by that, anyhow," with cool impertinence, observed Lovell, who hated the speaker.

"I don't think we do," said the lady, ignoring the personal meaning of his words, "on the whole, men make more of us now-a-days."

"Collectively or individually?" said Lovell, moving on.

"Both, Mr. Lovell! both! ha! ha! ha!"

When Mrs. Greville was going, Vandeleur, who had had small speech of her during the evening, hoped to put her in her carriage, but Lord Plantagenet forestalled him; two or three men were also talking and laughing with her, but Lovell, who was in her wake, was the only one who saw that a bunch of violets that she had worn in her bosom fell to the ground, and they were not left to be trodden under foot.

CHAPTER V.

"La santé de l'âme n'est pas plus assurée que celle du corps ; et quoique l'on paraisse éloigné des passions, on n'est pas moins en danger de s'y laisser emporter, que de tomber malade quand on se porte bien."

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

"She was an orphan—she was desolate ;
To such there is lack of consolation !
She had no younger brother—tender and brave,
To shield her in life's shocks. She had not one
Fair, gentle sister to direct or soothe,
Or share her destiny. She had no sire—
No doting mother to point out the shoals
In life's dark ocean."

E. NELSON.

THE days glided by—as they do vanish when happiness and pleasure fill every hour, and leave small leisure for counting the flight of time—so that when Miss Wilson wrote to announce her advent, Mrs. Greville was startled to find that three weeks had elapsed since her arrival in town.

The friendship between her and Vandeleur had ripened into a tender, fraternal affection —a friendship which added a great charm to her life.

Most women cling to some individual affection. C'est un besoin de notre cœur : and if we have neither husband, brother, father, nor child to supply that want, the chances are that we form a romantic attachment for some friend of the opposite sex—in all honour and truth, for a woman's heart is naturally very pure—and the charm to her of such an attachment is in the sympathy and protection afforded by stronger nature. The turbulent feelings that excite a man in his affections are not often part of her nature ; and she would not wake from friendship's tender dream, did not man arouse her. It was in this bark of friendship and sympathy, with honesty at the prow, that Eveline Greville was sailing down the river of happiness ; and not a single monitory cloud had appeared to warn her to be on the alert.

Not a day passed but what she met Vandeleur somewhere. In the Row, where she rode with Lord Okehampton—at morning or evening parties—at the opera ; and as he had offered to choose her horses, and see to

the building of her carriages, he was often compelled to call on her respecting such matters. But this glad readiness to fulfil her every behest was marked by so deep a respect that she asked herself no questions. He was to her as a dear brother, to whom she might with confidence turn for advice and assistance.

No doubt this was very incautious. The affair with Challenor ought to have made her wiser. But who thinks of storms when the summer sun is shining? Six months had elapsed since that morning: she had not seen Challenor again—the disagreeable affair had been put aside, and she never dreamt of doubting the integrity of one she esteemed so highly as Vandeleur. It would have been too monstrous. Besides, truth to say, she had small leisure for reflections of any sort. In the midst of gaiety, hurrying from one scene of pleasure to another, moments of self-communion are very scant, especially when the heart is light and untrammelled.

Her popularity was proverbial: she was greatly *répandue* in the *élite* of London society, and it was already who would get cards for the various entertainments with which she intended to inaugurate her new house in Lowndes Square?

Naturally enough she was gratified at this homage, and she looked forward to her coming reign with pleasure, crediting the world with a kindness that was in fact attributable to her fashion and high position. Guileless and simple-minded herself, she dreamt of no *arrière pensée* in others.

Her last morning with the Okehamptons had come, and she was sitting with her hostess while waiting for her carriage.

"I am truly sorry you are leaving us," said Lady Okehampton. "It has been a great pleasure and a great comfort having you, and your going now is almost as bad as marrying another daughter. Must you take that dreadful journey to Wales? Why not let your servants do what you want, and stay here till your house in Lowndes Square is ready?"

"My house is ready," replied Eveline, gratified at her cousin's kind feeling towards her; "it is not that, but I have left everything so unsettled at Llanfenydd, that I fear my presence there is necessary for a few days. I am my own prime minister and secretary for home affairs, you know; and I must give a look to my schools and asylums. The fact is, I ought to have gone long ago, but you

have been so kind to me, that I could not tear myself away till I was obliged. I had no idea London could be so charming; but then you have really made me feel as though I were one of your own daughters."

"We both regard you quite in that light, dear child; you have become very dear to us. Mind you write and say which day you return. We shall be very glad to have you back," and Lady Okehampton kissed her affectionately as she bade her farewell.

Lord Okehampton came out of the library to bid her good-bye, good-humouredly chaffing her on her insisting that her presence was so necessary at Llanfenydd.

"It's all nonsense your going down," he said, "any deputy can do what you want."

"I am not so sure," she laughingly replied; "at all events, I *imagine* I am necessary; and that, you know, is more than half the battle."

"Stop here, and send Vandeleur in your place."

"Mr. Vandeleur?" exclaimed Eveline. "Well, I do like him very much; but, first of all, I should not like to ask him to leave town in the middle of the season; and secondly, I don't think he is practical in the matter of schools and old women."

"More *au fait* with young ladies, you think," said her host, half laughing.

"I think he likes pretty women—most men do," said Mrs. Greville, looking up archly.

"I own the soft impeachment," replied Lord Okehampton, laughing outright, "therefore, I say, come back to us as soon as you can."

"Before the week is over you will see me in town again; and don't forget that you grace my first dinner-party this day week. I must have your support on that trying occasion. Adieu," and gaily kissing her hand, Mrs. Greville drove off to Paddington.

"What a charming creature she is," thought her host (paternally) as he re-entered the library.

At Paddington the first person whom Mrs. Greville saw was Vandeleur.

"This is delightful!" she exclaimed. "Are you going anywhere by this train?"

"No. I am come to see you off," said he.

"How very nice of you! Lord Okehampton has been proposing that I should send you down to Llanfenydd instead of myself; but I told him you did not like ugly old women—and we are *very* ugly in Wales!"

"So I perceive," replied Vandeleur, leaning in at the window of the carriage in which he had placed her. "How long shall you stay down there?"

"Not longer than I can possibly help—three or four days. I must get back by Saturday, for on Tuesday I am to be launched all alone. Don't forget that you dine with me; and promise to stop and be crushed to death afterwards! I have got Grisi—did I tell you?"

"I am going down for a few days' fishing before the week is over, so don't hurry back to town."

"Really? I *am* so glad, for now you will see that my home is not in the gloomy abode you have pictured to yourself. It is the sunniest, brightest spot. Which day will you come?"

"Going by this train, sir? Stand back, then, please; time's up," and the official motioned him away.

A tiny, lavender-kidded hand waved to him out of the window—a shrill whistle—a groan running along the whole line of carriages—a clanking of chains—and the train was off.

Vandeleur watched it out of sight, and turned away, thinking that London had never

before looked so dreary. And yet a May sun was shining over the metropolis.

When Mrs. Greville reached her home all was looking so lovely and bright—the early roses out—the rhododendrons and azaleas in full bloom—the trees in all the beauty of their spring foliage—the birds singing so joyously, that she felt a pang at the thought of leaving it again so soon for the noise and smoke of London. She wandered down to the river, which, full from the spring rains, was now clear and rapid, and its bright, laughing ripples seemed to welcome her home. How she longed to have the little sickly Vandeleurs down there. "Wouldn't I teach them to play and romp as they ought to do? and shouldn't they be as naughty as ever they chose?" she said, viciously.

Mrs. Greville had considerably enlarged the cottage since she had been there, but she had been careful not to disturb its old picturesque appearance. A long, low building, with an overhanging roof and gable-ends, the walls covered with roses—now a mass of yellow bloom from Maréchal Niel—stood in a very few acres of ground; but these were so well planted and so artfully disposed, that you would have believed that they occupied a

far ampler space. Nature had done a great deal, and taste and art had finished what she had so generously begun. Venerable trees cast their shadows on the greenest of swards, through which wound the road, relieved on either side by a profusion of gay flowers, rhododendrons, and other shrubs.

The garden, on to which opened the drawing-room windows, was a mingled mass of brilliant hues and sweet odours, even at that season—the end of May—for, situated on the warm western coast, sheltered by distant hills from the cruel blasts from the east, and looking full south, Llanfenydd was always a month earlier than less favoured spots.

The garden was bounded and protected by a rising bank of American shrubs, interspersed with roses; and beyond it, passing under interlacing trees, was the rosery—a veritable fairy bower which its mistress had taken no little delight and pride in arranging.

Roses, nothing but roses everywhere; climbing over trellises, clustering on the ground, or rearing their prouder heads on standards; but always roses. A plashing fountain with its murmuring drip, stood in the midst, while a broad sunny bank, planted with stately elms, with an undergrowth of roses and honey-

suckle, led down to the river. It was a place to dream of, and dream in.

The cottage still retained its character, but could boast of far more comforts than many houses of greater pretensions; and the perfect taste that had presided over the internal arrangements, met you at every turn. Statues and plants, backed by mirrors, decorated the entrance hall and passage, which ran through the body of the house. Red velvet curtains, sheltering all draughts, richly draped the entrances, and threw a warm glow on the marble figures.

There were not many rooms in the cottage, but they were all furnished with exquisite taste, and the first thing that struck you on entering the drawing-room was the rare wealth of colour, and the sense of repose and refinement that pervaded the apartment; but it was not till you had taken in the details that you perceived that the brilliant colouring was due to the harmonious disposition of a profusion of flowers, plants, and rare china, all of which received an admirable background from the red carpet into which the feet sank as into moss—from the warm gray walls hung with gems of art—and from the soft folds of the pale green satin curtains that, shaded with

lace and crimson satin ribbons, draped windows opening to the ground.

Turn which way you would, your eye was met by a rich blending of purple and orange and white and red flowers, while every angle was filled by some hothouse plant, that, standing in a gorgeous coloured vase, reared its delicate branches nearly to the ceiling.

Luxurious chairs and couches invitingly opened their friendly arms to you—tables and *étagères* were covered with Sèvres, Dresden, and all the knick-knacks with which a woman loves to surround herself—books and papers were in abundance.

The grand piano which stood open, and the table, on which was a half-finished drawing, with all the appurtenances thereof, proclaimed the cultivation of no mean talents ; while a sweet home-touch was given to this charming room, by the dainty work-table that, with a small sofa and footstool, occupied a cozy recess —evidently sacred to the mistress of the house.

At one end of the room was a well-filled conservatory, with a small alabaster fountain in the middle, and separated from the room by a crimson-velvet *portière*, but mirrors were so cunningly arranged that the conservatory

was repeated *ad infinitum*, so that the room seemed planted in the midst of it.

The whole effect was very beautiful, and you instinctively felt that if money had been spent with a lavish hand, the taste that controlled it could only belong to a young and charming woman, for unconsciously we form our ideas of one by her home surroundings.

Who has not felt the indescribable and instantaneous charm produced by such a room as I have endeavoured to describe? and who has not been equally impressed, in a different way, by the gaudy luxury of another, redolent, not of sweet-scented flowers, but of heavy perfume, and glaring with gilding and inharmonious colours? Who has not shuddered on entering a bare, stiffly-furnished saloon, with its cold, handsome, well-polished tables, chairs placed with such mathematical precision, that one involuntarily asks oneself if any one has ever been bold enough to move them? Do not one and all speak eloquently of their owners?

Mrs. Greville's rooms certainly denoted the character of the presiding genius. Refinement and cultivated tastes showed themselves everywhere; and the harmony that prevailed on all around, betokened the beautiful mind that had produced it. Some German author

— I forget which at this moment — says, "That truth is beautiful—that the beautiful is harmony—*ergo*, truth is harmony, and harmony is truth."

Truly his theory was borne out by the exquisite harmony that existed in every place which Mrs. Greville inhabited, for a more truthful, lovely character, would be hard to find.

Two days had passed, and she was expecting Vandeleur down. Wishing to give her dear friend and brother the brightest welcome that she could, she had sought to make her rooms prettier than ever; and she rejoiced to see that a brilliant sunshine was throwing a warm glow over what he was pleased to call her gloomy retreat and nest of morbid fancies. It was all done, and thought, in innocent pride and affection, without any other idea, for her heart had never as yet thrilled at the echo of a dear footstep, nor felt its beatings stilled at the sudden sound of a beloved voice. All those thousand little tokens by which love proclaims itself, were unknown to her; and it was in all innocence, in all ignorance that she was treading that flowery path which leads either to an earthly paradise or to an abyss of human woe. Secure in her own

rectitude, she was happy, perilously happy, as was once our first mother in the Garden of Eden, ere knowledge turned the fruit to dust and ashes.

Hovering among her roses armed with scissors and basket, Mrs. Greville was, late in the afternoon, rifling her garden of its sweets, when, a long shadow falling across her path, she looked up, and saw the man of whom she had been thinking leaning on the wicket, watching her.

"So glad to see you!" she exclaimed, stretching out her hands, the quick blush on her cheek—she had not lost that girlish trick —"how long have you been there?"

"Hours; waiting at the gates of Paradise."

"Poor Peri!" laughed Eveline. "Is not this a lovely spot?" she asked, taking him to the top of the sloping bank and making him look down upon her rosery, and with childlike glee, extorting from him a complete refutation of his preconceived notions of her Welsh home. "And now you must come and see my houses. I am very proud of my stove plants; such a traveller as you are ought to know all about my orchids."

Thus wandering over this charming spot, lingering about the peach houses and the

vineries, where luscious fruit hung in tempting ripeness, these two idled away the summer hours in perfect, unalloyed bliss.

What is the boundary line that divides affection from love? Being a woman, I speak as one, and say that there is none in a woman's heart. The same tenderness, the same generosity, the same unselfishness, characterises her sentiments in either case; and a pure-hearted woman steps the magic boundary —steps from the temperate into the torrid zone—with as much ignorance as would a mariner, without mathematical instruments, sail from latitude 11° to latitude 10°.

Have any of my readers ever watched a fly caught in the gossamer threads of his natural enemy, the spider—threads so airy, so slender, that a breath will waft them away? He was caught unawares when fluttering in the summer sunshine; but the web is so slight so fragile, one flap of his tiny, gauzy wing will surely break through the airy obstacle! But in vain he flaps his wings, in vain he struggles; he is impotent against the lovely web that dazzled him with its prismatic hues, and he sinks down—a prey to his enemy.

Is it not the old story of the human heart over again?

Are there not also life-webs in which human flies get entangled unawares—unwittingly—and against which they struggle in vain? Lovely, golden, glittering—but fatal—is the web that Cupid weaves to catch the errant heart that, basking in the sunshine, is lured to its fate by the heavenly hues hung out to charm it.

Vandeleur, however, had not the excuse of ignorance. He was too well versed in love affairs not to know the danger that he and Eveline were incurring; but he said to himself, that if a tender, he would be a true friend to the woman he loved so well. But alas! "with best intentions we oft incur the worst," and in avoiding Charybdis fall into Scylla.

"This is indeed a pretty home, far prettier than anything that I had imagined, though you did raise my expectations very high," said he, sitting by her side after dinner, and watching her fairy fingers toying with a piece of embroidery; "and what happiness to be once more alone with you—all your host of admirers at a safe distance!"

"A host?" repeated Mrs. Greville, laughing. "I really don't think that I have many."

"You rapacious woman! how many more

do you want? Let me see," said he, leaning back and proceeding to count on his fingers, "there's Hurstmonceaux, but he is not available, being engaged—"

"Engaged, is he? I did not know it," said Eveline, surprised.

"It only occurred yesterday, I believe. Have I destroyed a dream?"

"I think I can survive it," she replied, laughing. "But seriously, such a charming mother-in-law as the duchess would be an inducement."

"You have a chance, then. She wants you to marry Plantagenet." Vandeleur dropped his badinage, and spoke very seriously.

"Nonsense! she wishes nothing so absurd," retorted Eveline.

"Why absurd?" asked Vandeleur.

"It *is* absurd. A boy like that."

"You are almost the same age. Then what of Mr. Lovell, Lord Ticehurst, Sir Henry Charlton"—

"A truce to such folly," said Mrs. Greville, folding up her work; "now I am going to sing to you, which," she added, archly, "will be more improving than listening to your nonsense."

"Don't sing. Sit down again. I like talking to you better," and Vandeleur gently drew

her back again to the sofa. "I can hear you sing at any time, but I have never had you to myself like this."

His arm stole round her, but she gently unwound it.

"What a blessed home this will be to some happier man than I! You know what mine is—a palace of ice! Very beautiful, and the frozen statue very faultless, but it chills one to the heart."

"Hush, Mr. Vandeleur, do not speak so bitterly," said Eveline, shocked.

"What have I to brighten my life?" he replied, moodily.

"Much, everything," she answered earnestly; "and if a sister's friendship can add to your happiness, you know you have mine."

"Sisters call their brothers by their Christian names," said he, pettishly.

"Well, then—Henry."

The word came hesitatingly, in a whisper, she blushing deeply the while. She called no man by his Christian name, and doing so now made her shy.

"I do love to see you look bashful," said he, enchanted. "Call me Henry again—dearest."

His voice sank to a low, passionate murmur, thrilling through her every nerve with a mes-

meric influence that, for a moment, held her enthralled. He marked her unwonted agitation, and his arm again stole round her waist. He felt the throbbing heart beneath his hand —again that magnetic whisper, breathed, rather than uttered, and of which he well knew the power—and bending down his head his lips touched hers. He could have dwelt on those lips for ever, but the contact woke her from the perilous trance, and drawing away from him, she buried her burning face in her hands.

"My own sweet one! why, what is this?" said he as he tenderly drew down her hands, and saw that her face was bathed in tears of real distress.

Passionately he craved her forgiveness, assured her of his own rectitude, and implored her to trust to him. But carried away by the delicious hope that he was beloved by this beautiful creature, even as he had loved her from the first, he whispered, kneeling at her feet,

"You do love me, darling. Say that you do. Not only as a brother—a friend—but something far, far dearer."

She looked up—shame and horror in her sweet eyes.

"Love *you*—a married man? Oh, Henry!" and she turned from him in an agony of shame and reproach.

He had not counted on the purity of that heart to which he had, unconsciously to herself, become so dear, but not so dear as honour and rectitude. He saw his error, and did his best to rectify it; and by degrees soothed in some measure her anguish—an anguish which he saw had no anger against *him* in it, but was full of bitter reproach as regarded herself. She forgave *him* for his mad words; but not *herself*—sure sign of a woman's danger.

He affected not to see her trouble, and presently taking a volume of Byron, he beguiled away the rest of the evening in reading to her various portions of Childe Harold, and when he left her he reverently lifted her hands to his lips, as he bade "God bless her," and said he should come in the morning on his way to his fishing, to see how she was.

Very quiet and calm she was till he was gone; then came the bitter shame and humiliation, as the truth forced itself upon her that she loved him—a man married to another woman. Shocked and pained as she had been at his avowal, she had not spurned him from her. And why? Alas! her heart had

pleaded for him. She blamed *herself*, not *him*.

It was a bitter awakening from the rosy dream in which she had been living. The fool's paradise faded away, and the truth stood revealed. It was an awful shock to her; and there was but one resource. They must part. She would tell him so the next morning. He would at once recognise the propriety of such a step—of that she felt sure. It would be very painful, very hard; but there was no help for it. Part they must, and at once.

Very different were Vandeleur's feelings, as he walked down to his inn; but the next morning, the sight of her pale, sad face and swollen eyes, was a bitter reproach to him, and his elation melted into a resolution that he vowed should not be shaken.

He knew that he was beloved, and, grateful for that love, his manner was so respectful, so deprecating, that she shrank from being the first to revert to a subject which, she thought, must be as painful, as fearful to him as to herself; and thus it came about that a tacit permission was taken to remain till the Saturday, as he had originally intended.

It was a mad experiment, which could not

fail to increase their newly-awakened love. The very curb that was kept on word and look only served to keep their danger in view. Her nervous, frightened manner was not lost on Vandeleur; but he had sworn to himself she should be sacred to him as a sister, sworn that he would never bring another tear to those dear eyes; and he kept his vow so faithfully for the next eight-and-forty hours, that Eveline was in some measure re-assured and calmed. But she had looked at the tree of knowledge, and though not turned out of Paradise, her soul quailed within her; for she knew now what love meant, and knew that Vandeleur was henceforth the *one* man in the world to her. Such love was unholy, and it must be crushed out, even though life went in the struggle; but she loved him, with a love that terrified *her*, and gladdened the other.

And so the two days, which Vandeleur termed his short but blissful holiday, came to an end, and—

> "The slow, sweet hours, that bring us all things good,
> The slow, sad hours that bring us all things ill,"

brought the night in which *they* also

> "Sat together, and alone, for the last time."

The end was come, and he was to return home early on the following morning.

Home! A word that should be of all sweetest. And it was one that neither cared to utter!

There was no reading that night, and but little said; for they durst not trust themselves, lest a tremulous voice, an unintentional word, should give utterance to that which must never be uttered between those two, but which —both knew it now—filled their hearts.

She knew they must part—then and for ever. She had known it from the first moment that her heart and his had been laid bare before her; but she had deferred passing the hard verdict till that last evening. And now, though she strove to nerve herself for the task, her quivering lips refused to give utterance to the sentence of banishment, which, woman-like, pained her far more for *his* sake than for her own.

It was hard for her, she felt, to be the one who must take from him that which he had often told her was his only sunshine—namely, her friendship. It was very hard for her to be compelled to annihilate with one word the happiness which her affection and society afforded him.

But it must be done. And yet she sat silent, deferring the evil moment, as we so often defer that which is hard to bear. He, too, was silent, but with very different thoughts ; and he wist not whence came the sad trouble on the sweet face before him, and rather thought it was elicited by regret at his leaving her, and that thought broke down his resolutions of silence.

"We shall meet in a day or two, my own one," said he, tenderly, as he prepared to go.

She looked up—her lips turned white and moved ; but the words, "*We meet no more*," died upon them. She *could* not say them, not with that dear face looking down on her so fondly, so trustfully; she would write them after he was gone, she would have more courage then. And he, seeing the earnest eyes fixed on his, once again drew her to his breast ; and then her pent-up flood of tears broke forth, but silently, for instinctively she knew that he would combat her resolution if she told it him. And he, still thinking that she wept at the thought of his departure, spoke tenderly and soothingly, and kept down the burning words that hovered on his lips, but—

"The trance gave way
To those caresses, when a hundred times
In that last kiss, which never was the last,
Farewell, like endless welcome, lived and died."

He was gone at last. She stood at the open window through which he had passed, leaving her with a fervent "God bless you!" which still vibrated in her ears—on her lips. "He had blessed her—that was well—and he *might* bless her, and God would bless him —bless them both; for she would never see him again—never again." She listened to the last echo of his footfall; to the click of the wicket as he closed it after him. And then all was deeply silent, save for the distant sheep-bell, which seemed to her to repeat her own sad words—"never again."

Still she stood there, in the soft summer night; and gradually her tender, wistful eyes turned hard and stony, and her sweet, rosy lips became stern and compressed, as she nerved herself for the coming task. But still she stood there, where he had last kissed her —from whence she had last seen his shadow in the fair moonlight. And—

"The dark was worn, and over-head
The lights of sunset and of sunrise mixed
In that brief summer night."

But she saw it not, and the "low matin chirp," that tells of coming day, was unheard by her; for one sound alone filled the soft air of that summer night, which was no longer quite the night—

"Never again!"

The church-bell tolled forth the hours. The hours? Oh, no! Its metal tongue clanged out the same weary words—

"Never again!"

Still in the same stupor, she turned and re-entered the room.

The first object that caught her sight was a miniature of her mother, standing in its open frame on the table, in the full light of the lamp.

A cry, a wail of agony, and the frozen torrent of tears rushed forth and saved her over-wrought and over-burdened brain.

Long and passionately she wept; but an angel might have carried those tears to heaven.

At last she rose and wrote her letter, bidding him farewell for ever. She did not attempt to hide her own anguish, nor pretend that he would not feel the separation as keenly; but she implored him to be strong and brave in this sorrow for her sake, for his

own sake, and for that of his children, his wife—to live nobly through this trial, as she would, and to acquiesce in her decision without a murmur, while they could yet raise their hearts in truth and honour.

She wrote earnestly and honestly; but the spirit of love breathed in every sentence, in every word, as he well knew when he read that letter.

Alas! why could she not use the same stern, uncompromising words, that once before, and not so long ago, she had spoken to a married man who had talked of love to her?

Vandeleur would have taken his dismissal, wounded, hurt, as had been that other one; but not loving her one whit the less. Would he not rather have loved the more? Does a man ever love a woman better for knowing that her heart and soul are his?

Never. It seems the law of nature that man's affection shall subside as his assurance of a woman's love increases.

But alas! what woman has courage to spurn from her the man whom she has enshrined in her heart of hearts? A woman may have the dire misfortune of loving a married man, when every feeling will be enlisted on her own side, still she will be tender to her idol, imagining,

fond fool, that words of disdain will cut him to the heart. She cannot say them, neither could Eveline send Vandeleur from her with scornful words. She could not do that, but she would with gentle entreaty lead him to what was right.

It might seem hard to him at first, for she knew how cold and dreary was his home, but still she felt assured that he would not resist her pleading ; on the contrary, one so good as he would second her with all his might.

Calmed by this thought, and exhausted by the emotions of the last few hours, she sought some repose ere the Sabbath bell summoned her to church. She slept, but who has not felt the miserable waking of that sad to-morrow, which has brought a blank into his life ? That to-morrow, and many more to-morrows, through which he must live till he has lived down his sorrow ! Well for him who can take up his cross, and nobly bear it to the end. Shall he not be rewarded, even in this world ? Surely so.

Bravely did Eveline Greville take up *her* cross ; and, strong with a good and holy resolution, she went about her various duties in a cheerful spirit. She visited her schools, her poor people, and honestly tried to find interest

in her daily surroundings. They *had* sufficed her hitherto—they *should* do so in future.

So she said, so she intended; and then she bethought her of the dinner party and the concert, for which she had issued invitations for the following Tuesday.

It was but one of the daily trifles that are woven into the hardest struggles of life; but it had to be attended to. Because she was in fearful peril and trouble, she could not cast aside the civilities of life, so she wrote to her cousin, Lady Okehampton, asking her to take her place and receive her guests, as she was too ill to leave Wales.

She decided, too, on selling the house she had just bought; in short, she would do all that lay in her power to help both Vandeleur and herself in their sore strait.

But in due course came his answer to her appeal, a most unexpected one, and one that shook her to the soul.

He wrote with all the eloquence of which he was master, and told her that not only was he wounded to the heart, but justly indignant at her want of trust in him—at her cruel injustice. That unless she retracted her unfeeling heartless sentence, his life would henceforth be desolate. And what did he ask of

her? To be a brother to her—a tender, faithful friend. Could she really refuse that boon to one who had little or nothing else to soothe his weary pilgrimage on earth? Already her influence had made him a more thoughtful, and he hoped, a better man. If she withdrew her friendship—and he asked nothing more—he would not answer for himself, he knew not into what wretched abyss he might not be plunged. He would leave his fate in her hands. He could say no more.

The letter was one to shake any loving, tender woman, who had not one extraneous help on earth: no child, no brother nor sister, nor mother to turn to for help. She was in sore need, and who, with any knowledge of human nature, can wonder that her answer to his appeal was less firm, and more imploring than the first?

And Vandeleur answered it in person.

The sale of the new house was stopped, and in a few days Mrs. Greville was installed in it, strong with every high and good intention.

CHAPTER VI.

"Palabras de santo, uñas de gato."
SPANISH PROVERB.

"Defend me from my friends."
ENGLISH PROVERB.

"IT is really *too* tiresome, my diamond necklace has not been sent back, and I must have it for the drawing-room."

The speaker was Lady Okehampton, the hour breakfast-time, the audience her husband and Miss Wilson.

"Send Thomas for it," was the practical and unfeeling remark that her husband made.

"How can I send Thomas? Of course they will not give it to him. Miss Wilson, would you take the brougham, and call for it?"

Of course Miss Wilson would, nothing would give her greater pleasure; was there anything else she could do for Lady Okehampton while she was out?

"No, nothing; yes, indeed there is. Will you call on Mrs. Vandeleur, and ask her about the schoolmistress she recommended? Here is another letter from Mrs. Darrell about it. But you do not know Mrs. Vandeleur, I think?"

"That does not signify," said Miss Wilson, who was dying to get an entrée into that house.

"I am sure Mrs. Vandeleur would see any one *you* sent, and I shall be delighted to be of any use."

"What do you think, George?" asked Lady Okehampton.

"As Miss Wilson seems so desirous to go, I see no objection," said her husband, dryly.

Miss Wilson disclaimed, she was only anxious to do *anything* to oblige Lady Okehampton.

Miss Wilson did not like his lordship, and was afraid of him, especially when he spoke in the dry tone he was apt to use to her, or rather at her, for he never spoke to her.

"Then, Miss Wilson, I will ask you to call there," said her patroness; "you are so practical, you will know everything that should be asked, and then perhaps you will be so good as to write to Mrs. Darrell for me--and

stay, while you are at Mrs. Vandeleur's, do send the carriage round to Lowndes Square, and desire the footman to inquire if Mrs. Greville has come. It is so odd that I have not heard from her again. I hope she is not worse."

Miss Wilson went to put her bonnet on.

"I cannot understand your keeping that woman about you. I hate the sight of her," and Lord Okehampton put down the *Times* and looked across the table at his wife.

"She is so useful."

"If you want some one of that sort, in God's name get some woman and pay her, and let her keep out of one's sight. As for this one, she has the most shifty eyes I ever saw; she will do you an ugly turn some day."

Lady Okehampton drew herself up and made some haughty answer.

"As you will, only recollect that a gnat can sting, and be extremely unpleasant."

Kind, good-natured Lady Okehampton little knew the weapons that Miss Constance was forging against her favourite, when she sent her on these commissions.

Still cherishing her hatred of Eveline, Miss Constance drove straight to Lowndes Square herself—she might learn something, and she never lost a chance..

Mrs. Greville had not arrived, so she got out to have a talk with the old woman who opened the door.

"I am so sorry to find that Mrs. Greville is not in town; seeing the windows open, I had hoped to find her."

"The servants were coming up that day, so she supposed the mistress would not be long a-following."

"And then do you go, or does Mrs. Greville keep you here? It will be a great loss to you," said Miss Wilson, sympathisingly.

"Nae sae meikle, the leddy has been vara gude to me."

"Then you know Mrs. Greville?"

"Yes, I ken the leddy; she has come mony a time, but the gentleman has ne'er been but the first time when they come thegither to see the house. A handsome coople they war too."

"My good woman, Mrs. Greville is a widow."

"An' she sae young too!" said the woman, lifting up her hands. "She looks nae mair nor a bairn hersell. Mayhap she an' the gentleman are aboot to be married?"

"I have not heard of it. Who was he? What was he like?"

"I dinna ken wha he war, but he war

a bonnie gentlemon wi' mustachers, an' a free-honded ane too; an' I mind me weel. I tould him he had a bonnie bride, an' he luked quite shame-faced like."

"Oh, ho!" thought Miss Wilson, "I think I smell a rat.—A slight, good-looking man, with reddish whiskers and moustache, and curly brown hair, did you not say?"

"I did nae say so, but as ye ken him sae weel, ye need nae fash me with sae mony questions," said the Scotchwoman, beginning to take a great dislike to her visitor.

Eveline had been very kind to her, had got a sick daughter into the Consumptive Hospital, and done her one or two other kindnesses which the old woman remembered gratefully; and she did not like so much inquisitiveness about the affairs and the friends of her patroness.

"And I suppose Mr. Vandeleur—you called him so, I think?—drove away with her that day?"

"Ye may suppose what ye like; an' wha shall I tell Mustress Greville is the leddy wha has been speering sae muckle aboot her an' her freends?" said the woman, not too respectfully, and opening the door. A broad hint that she might leave.

"You may say Lady Okehampton sent me, you insolent woman!" cried Miss Wilson, as she stood on the door-step.

"I dinna believe her leddyship sent ye at all," muttered the woman, closing the door almost before Miss Wilson had passed the threshold.

"Those who stand on slippery places make nice of no vile hold whereon to stay themselves," and Miss Wilson pocketed the affront for the sake of the information that she had gained.

"Oh, ho!" thought she, "so intimate as to be taken for bride and bridegroom. Pretty doings indeed! I wonder if Mrs. V. knows this."

On reaching Mr. Vandeleur's house she met him coming down the door-steps.

"I hope your cold is well," he ironically remarked.

It was a false step, as he knew the moment that he had said it.

"How anxious you were that Mrs. Greville should come to London," she retorted; "very gratifying to find your arguments so powerful. I have just been in Lowndes Square, and the nice old Scotchwoman has been having quite a confidential chat with me. She told me all

about your taking Mrs. Greville there, and going over the house with her, and—he-he!—thought—he-he!—you were the happy bridegroom; it was too funny."

"Since when have ladies learnt to find pleasure in 'confidential chats' with people of that class? The taste is unusual. You are going to see my wife? I was not aware that you were acquainted; I fancied the pleasure had been confined to myself. Good-morning."

Biting her lips with mortification, she was ushered into Mrs. Vandeleur's presence.

She had many apologies to offer: she had come on the part of Lady Okehampton concerning a matter of which she, Miss Wilson, felt sure that Mrs. Vandeleur, with her knowledge of the training of children, and the management of schools, would at once see the importance, and excuse the intrusion. Lady Okehampton was so distressed at being unable to call herself, and had sent a most unworthy substitute, to save Mrs. Vandeleur the trouble of writing, though she had assured her friend that Mrs. Vandeleur's recommendation was sufficient without any further question.

"Indeed," I said to her, "Mrs. Vande-

leur's schools are too well known, to say nothing of the admirable training of her own children—a training which I believe every mother envies, though this is too sacred a matter for strangers to speak of—but her admirable schools make a recommendation from *her*, a character in itself. Indeed, I do not know what questions I *can* ask, when *you* say that the young woman is fit for the place."

Mrs. Vandeleur despised flattery and flatterers — strong-minded people do; but she liked her meed of justice, and it was with a relaxing face that she said she believed she could conscientiously recommend the girl—she had trained her herself.

"Trained her yourself! then my dear madam, what need to ask further? Lady Okehampton is indeed a fortunate woman to have found such a one for her school, and schools are such a terrible anxiety, as I too well know." Miss Wilson, who had never been inside one, shook her head with great self-condolence and sense of responsibility.

Some talk on the training of the mind of youth here followed, to which Miss Wilson listened with rapt attention and appropriate gestures.

"The great rules of life to be inculcated from the earliest infancy," said Mrs. Vandeleur, "are those of acting from fixed principles and duty, and of keeping feelings in subjection to reason."

"Ah! my dear madam," cried Miss Wilson, enraptured at such wisdom, and with sorrowful deprecation of human frailty, "if England owned more mothers like *you*, we should be a greater and a happier nation. I feel I am taking a great liberty on this *short* acquaintance, but the deep thought that you have evidently bestowed on this subject, and your kind reception of my unworthy *self*-embolden me to ask your advice on a matter that *greatly* troubles me, and which I have not ventured to speak of to *any* one else—one so *shrinks* from the possibility of doing a fellow-creature any harm even with the *kindest* motives." Miss Wilson emphasised her words very considerably to give them greater weight.

Mrs. Vandeleur thought Miss Wilson a very superior young woman, and graciously assured her that any advice which she could give her was much at her service.

"It is about a young creature I am deeply interested in. I do not really think there is

the least *harm* in her, but she is so—what shall I say?—so thoughtless, so impulsive; and I cannot help hoping that guided by your knowledge of human nature, I *might* be the humble instrument of bringing Eveline Greville to a steadier frame of mind."

"Do you mean *Mrs.* Greville?" asked the other, in an icy tone, which was not lost on Miss Wilson.

"You know her? Then there is some hope for her," ejaculated Miss Wilson, letting her hands drop on her lap with a sigh of relief. "I do not wish to be hard upon her, but it does so pain me to see her flighty manner with gentlemen. I dare say I am old-fashioned in my ideas, but I cannot bear to see a woman courting—exacting—attentions from every man, married or single, she meets. Now, at Beaumanoir, I really could have cried—and she would not listen to the words of advice I felt bound to offer—but, by the way, Mr. Vandeleur was there—no doubt he told you all about her—he was very kind to her, indeed he was most attentive to her—but how much better if she would listen to *you!*"

"I must beg to decline having anything to do with Mrs. Greville. I think her a most

objectionable woman. I regret that she should be a friend of yours."

"When I say *friend*, do not mistake me; it is the feeling one cannot help having for a fellow-creature one sees going on so foolishly; and really I would not have mentioned it, only that I have just come from her house—such an unwise thing that of living alone in London—and the nice old Scotchwoman who is in charge, told me she was really shocked when she found that the gentleman—whoever he was—who went so often to the house with Mrs. Greville, was not her husband—not that there is the least *harm*, indeed I know that your husband was good enough to go with her, and *that* speaks for itself; but really she *should* be more careful—the world is *so* ill-natured; but I am trespassing too long already on time, which I know is most valuable—might I hope you would allow me, —*sometimes*, when you *really* are not *too* busy —to come and see you? In this great, heartless, selfish Babylon it would be *such* a privilege."

All the time that Miss Wilson elaborated the above speech, she noted the dark cloud which gradually lowered on Mrs. Vandeleur's brow, and congratulating herself on the success

of her work, she pressed the lady's hand gratefully between both her own and took her leave.

"Ah, ah! Mrs. Greville, you will thwart me, will you? Two can play at that game," and in a pleasant frame of mind Miss Wilson drove to the jeweller's.

CHAPTER VII.

"How bitter a thing it is to look into happiness
Through another man's eyes."

SHAKESPEARE.

"How hard it seemed to me
When eyes love languid thro' half-shed tears would dwell
One earnest, earnest moment upon mine,
Then why not dare to see? When thy low voice
Faltering, would break its syllables, to keep
My own full-tune—hold passion in leash
And not leap forth and fall about thy neck,
And on thy bosom (deep desired relief!)
Rain out the heavy mist of tears that weighed
Upon my brain, my senses, and my soul!"

TENNYSON.

"THE country has not suited you, my fair friend," said Lord Okehampton, as he sat with Mrs. Greville the day after she had come to town. "Your fortnight there has robbed you of your roses, and done you more harm than our late hours in town."

"I have not been well," she replied, colour-

ing and hesitating; "but tell me, how went off my dinner-party? I must go and thank my lady for her kindness in doing proxy for me."

"Well, the dinner was excellent, and so was the wine; but I don't know that that made up for your absence. In fact, if you want to know the truth, it was very flat. Vandeleur could not rouse himself at all. We were all very low. Grisi helped us a bit afterwards."

"Ah! Lady Pierrepoint," said Eveline, rising to meet a lady who was announced, "always welcome, but doubly so now! Help me to defend myself. Your brother-in-law is scolding me dreadfully."

"The only one who dare attempt it," laughed Lady Pierrepoint; "sympathy has been the order of the day. Indeed, for three days we talked of nothing but your sufferings."

"So long as that! I am overwhelmed!"

"Glad to see the truant back again," said the Duke of Montserrat, coming in. "I promised the duchess to come and find out if you had returned, and whether you were going to the drawing-room with her to-morrow."

Mrs. Greville's room was soon crowded, and though she was cordial to every one, it

was not difficult to see that her spirits were forced, but this was attributed to her late illness, and it elicited renewed sympathy and interest, especially, as she said, that she intended to make up for her lost week, by being foremost in all the coming amusements.

She had come up in fear, resolving to fly at the first signal of danger. However, Vandeleur kept so strict a guard upon himself that she had no cause of complaint. The weeks flew by, their old relations of friendship seemed restored, and her natural cheerfulness and vivacity returned.

Her life in London was very different to the one she had contemplated when she was at Rossmoor, but which the duchess had then told her would be impossible if she intended being in society.

Mrs. Greville had pictured to herself long quiet mornings devoted to music and fine arts and study, surrounded by a small circle of the cleverest and most agreeable people in London —in short, she hoped to realise the charming literary coteries that existed in Paris in the seventeenth century.

These notions, wild and extravagant, at least in the nineteenth century, when people live much too fast for such sober pleasures, were

very speedily dispersed. Mrs. Greville's door was besieged at all hours, and she soon found that she had little or no time to call her own.

Long evenings made short mornings—her luncheon table was so cheery—her drawing-room so pleasant—that Mrs. Greville was never alone.

All this popularity had its charm, even in itself; but it had another one, that of enabling her to see daily, and without fear, the man who, under the sometimes dangerous name of friendship, was hourly becoming dearer to her. She knew his footfall on the pavement; she knew by that instinct which women alone possess if the hansom that rattled up to her door had him for its occupant, she knew his ring at the bell; but she never asked herself if all this knowledge were not excessively suspicious and dangerous.

She saw that he was happy and quiet, and believing that her words of counsel had borne fruit and had calmed his turbulent feelings, she asked no more; and grateful and happy, she was if possible more gentle with him than ever—accrediting him, after the fashion of a loving heart, with every virtue under the sun, and placing him on a pinnacle, the height of

which mortal man never yet attained; and, there elevated, she mentally worshipped her god.

What man could be insensible to all this, especially one who was already deeply in love with his worshipper? Adoring her all the more for the stringent line she had laid down for their mutual conduct, no morning passed but what he found his way to her drawing-room, where a gay and brilliant circle always congregated.

If Vandeleur's constant presence in that room were remarked on, too many men were in love with the fascinating Mrs. Greville for any one of themselves to say a word, and the ill-nature of her own sex was kept at bay by the affection of the Duchess of Montserrat.

No one would have ventured to say one word against one whom her grace delighted to honour. That in itself was an ægis against which none would have cared to tilt; for to belong to her grace's circle, to which only *la crême de la crême* was admitted, was in itself a passport; and those who were within the magic circle, or those who were moving heaven and earth to get there, would have thought twice before disparaging one whom she treated

as a daughter, the only one she had been known thus to favour.

The duchess was a clever woman, and soon saw by Mrs. Greville's manner that she must give up all hope of seeing her accept Lord Plantagenet's suit. It was a great disappointment to her, for she saw how deeply her boy's heart was engaged, and she herself had grown so fond of Eveline that nothing could have given her greater pleasure than calling her by the sweet name of daughter; but she saw it was not to be, so like a wise woman, she gave up her dream and let the two settle the affair between them in their own way.

Very warmly did Eveline return the duchess's affection, but it never occurred to her that she saw anything serious in her son's devoted attentions. He was desperately in love with her, after the manner of two-and-twenty with a woman a few years his senior, and Mrs. Greville treated him with that half-bantering *sans gêne* which a pretty woman is not unapt to use towards a handsome boy who adores her, but between whom and herself there can be no question of love.

But this frantic state of affairs could not go on. He would ask her point blank to be his wife. What was the good of telling a

woman he loved her, when she laughed at him and replied that of course he did, or some such chaff?

So he rushed on his fate in this wise, not as he had intended, when they should next be alone, but at a big reception his mother gave —a reception which was graced by royalty— and at which Eveline had attracted more than usual admiration.

Vandeleur's guarded conduct had restored her equanimity, and the old, sweet, child-like happiness—the greatest beautifier a woman can have—had once more returned to her exquisite face, while all unconsciously to herself, love (though she called it friendship) had, as it always does with a woman, given an intenser character to her nature and to her beauty.

She had never looked so lovely, so arch, so bright, since her childish days, and her youthful adorer rushed on his fate, blindly, as we always do.

She was very sorry for him, for she was fond of the frank-hearted, reckless boy, whose frantic adoration had amused her; but he, sanguine spoilt-child that he was, would not accept his fate.

"No, not even at any future time," said Mrs. Greville, in answer to his prayer.

"And my mother is so fond of you! She would have been so glad of it."

"Has the duchess——" began Eveline, hesitating.

"No, oh, no. Nothing of the sort. In fact, she told me that I had not the ghost of a chance."

Mrs. Greville bit her lip to repress a smile as she thought of such an expression coming from her grace's lips; but seeing the distressed look on Plan's usually careless, handsome face —so like his mother's, the friend whom she loved so well—

"Come," said she, holding out her hand, "let us forget this, and be friends again. Why, I am old enough to be your mother!"

"I don't know and don't care whether you are older or younger," taking her proffered hand. "You don't look eighteen, and you are the loveliest woman I ever saw, and the only one I ever loved."

Mrs. Greville looked up archly, and shook her head.

"'Pon my honour it's true. I don't mean to say that I have not flirted with other women, but I never asked one to be my wife before."

"And you nearly two-and-twenty!" she

laughed, and withdrawing the hand that he seemed not inclined to relinquish. "What a model of prudence!"

"If you knew what I felt for you," he said, in an aggrieved tone, "you would not laugh at me."

"I am not laughing at you, indeed I am not," she said, softening at once, "only you must not think of this. Believe me, it is out of the question."

"Perhaps you might learn to like me after a time," pleaded he. "Couldn't you try?"

"I like you very much now," she replied, gently; "and I am only sorry that this has occurred to interrupt our pleasant relations with each other."

"And is there no one—" and here he stopped short, conscious that he had no right to ask a question which he would have given his right hand to hear answered in the negative.

"I am glad you stopped," said she, pointedly, "for *that* is what no man has a right to ask. But to show you that I could not be angry with any one belonging to your mother, I will tell you that I have not the remotest intention of marrying again."

"Haven't you, really? There's comfort in that; and perhaps—"

"There is *no* 'perhaps,'" she hastily replied. "Nothing would induce me to marry a man younger than myself; nor for any consideration would I marry one I did not love. And now our conversation has lasted long enough to make all the gossips talk. Come," she added, with a kindly smile on the handsome boy who looked so woe-begone, "come, give me your arm, and let us go back to the drawing-room; and don't look so disconsolate, or your friends will be condoling with you."

"You treat me like a child," said he, pettishly.

"As you please," said Eveline, turning away.

"Don't be cross," said he, instantly joining her, and offering his arm, "don't be cross. You should have a little mercy on a man, when you have just given him a cold shower-bath."

The duchess, who saw the *tête-à-tête*, was sorry for her boy; she guessed what had happened; others saw it too—that interview in the conservatory where mirrors reflected every gesture—and drew their own conclusions.

Vandeleur had watched them with a jealousy amounting to agony, and seeing her re-enter the room, smiling, her hand on his arm, he felt sure that she had accepted him; and,

unable to bear the sight, he rushed from the house.

"She was lost to him—he knew that it would come," he said, "and with it had come an end to his life's happiness, to those delicious hours spent with her, listening to her light, graceful talk, or still sweeter song."

Hitherto he had known that no man had usurped the place which, he believed, he occupied in her affections; but now—it was all over; and in his heart he reproached her, said that her feelings were not so deep after all, that she could fall in and out of love without breaking her heart; very likely he had deceived himself when he thought that her friendship had partaken of a warmer feeling. Yet what had he to offer? Nothing, worse than nothing. What right had he to her love? None. He could not deny it, but he loved her with a passion that carried him away from all such considerations, and he bitterly reproached her for accepting a boy like that. "However," he said, loftily, "*he* could be generous;" and with this high-minded feeling he stalked down to his club, and wrote her a letter, which he posted as he went home, so as to ensure her receiving it the first thing in the morning—she should see that *he* did

not grudge her her happiness—that *he* would not stand between it and her—not he. As for him, he had done with life—what was anything to him now? He would go abroad—he would not be missed at home or anywhere else—not he. And with these comfortable and comforting feelings he went home.

The next morning, very moody, very ill-tempered—what he called "heart-broken"—he went, somewhere towards mid-day, to his club. The first object for which he looked, though he said he did not expect such a thing, was a letter from Mrs. Greville. There was one—a very tiny missive—but he seized it with a ray of hope that sent his pulses fluttering.

The note ran thus—

"I have such a strange letter from you. What does it mean? Come to me as soon as you get this. Yours,

"E. G."

To jump into a hansom and to drive to Lowndes Square was the work of a moment.

"Is it not true, then?" he exclaimed, as soon as the door closed upon them.

"What is not true? What made you

write me this letter?" said she, half reproachfully.

"Forgive me for doubting you; my own darling, forgive me!" he cried, drawing her to his heart; "you are all the world to me, and the thought of resigning you to another is worse than death to me. I cannot bear it."

She freed herself from his embrace, looking sadly at him, and

> "In her eyes a saintly lustre beam'd,
> And that most calm and holy confidence
> That guilt knows never."

Deep and fathomless as was the love she bore him, there was such purity in it, that, rebuked, he drew back and buried his face in his hands.

How hard it is for a man to believe that a woman's love is not as his! That she can love him much as a mother loves her child—with a love so pure, that angels might look on and smile. Such love is beyond a man's comprehension; and presently, when Vandeleur saw the tears in the tender eyes, and bethought him why she had refused a brilliant position, he no longer doubted that her heart was his, and only remembering that he loved her—madly, wildly, passionately—he lost all con-

trol over himself, and, falling at her feet, he told her of his mad passion, and still madder hopes.

"Oh, Henry! dear and loved as thou art, not that! Not that. In pity spare me," she cried, in an agonised voice which was choked with her emotions. "O that it should have come to this! Go, in mercy go!"

"Fool that I was!" said he, bitterly, and rising to his feet. "I did think that you loved me. I see now that I was mistaken. You have taught me a rude lesson. I thank you."

"*Not love you?* God forgive you, Henry," and before he could answer her she had glided from the room.

And when she passed out of his sight and did not return, he felt that he had been unjust and cruel. He waited, but she came not; and then he sent her up a note, beseeching her to see him. But her maid brought him a verbal answer, "that her mistress was lying down with a bad headache, and could not see anybody."

Vandeleur was nearly heart-broken at the result of his conduct. Full of remorse, he sat down to her writing-table, and indited her a letter overflowing with tenderness, self-re-

proach, entreaties for pardon. In short, he wrote everything which he could think of to soften her heart and gain his pardon. He left it on her table and went away, very nearly sure that he would be forgiven before the day was over. He knew the influence he had over her, and more than guessed the deep love she bore him, and the wildest passions were again aroused within him. She must—she should—be his; and he almost cursed the barrier that stood between them.

Where were all his promises—his resolutions? Alas! he never so much as recollected them. Too often do we forget when most our memory is wanted. When youth and health are our own, when our blood is coursing wildly through our veins, we think less of the future than of "the restless unsatisfied longing" of the present; and we forget that a day will come when every sin shall rise before us in awful condemnation, reminding us—when too late—of lost opportunities, broken resolutions, of every evil which we ourselves have done, and have caused others to do.

Who, at that last hour, but feels that those pleasures for which he imperilled his soul, have been but vanity, and that he would gladly, oh, how gladly! have relinquished all,

for the hour of ineffable peace, which, though gained by a life's struggle, comes to him who "knew the right and did it?"

Too often do we forget to remember that we are only on the highway to eternity, and that each milestone brings us nearer to the end, where all earthly joys and sorrows shall fade to nothingness, and where a bright morrow awaits to gladden every heavy-laden pilgrim who has borne his burden patiently to the end.

Occasionally we may remember it, once in a week perhaps; but when such thoughts would best serve us, is the very time when they make unto themselves wings, and leave us the prey of our mad passions.

Vandeleur forgot all, everything, but that he loved the woman whom he had sworn to protect; and as hour after hour passed by, and brought him no answer to his letter, he was half maddened.

CHAPTER VIII.

"And oh! how much I love him, what can tell?
Not words, not tears. Heaven only knows how much;
And every evening, when I say my prayers,
I pray to be forgiven for the sin
Of loving aught on earth with such a love!"

PHILIP VON ARTEVELDE.

"Most wretched man,
That to affections dost the bridle lend:
In their beginning they are weak and wan,
But soon through sufferance, grow to fearful end;
While they are weak, betimes with them contend."

SPENSER.

"HER grace's love, and would Mrs. Greville drive with her in the afternoon? and if you please, ma'am, Lady Pierrepoint is in the drawing-room, and Veitch's man is below, waiting to see you about the conservatory."

No peace for the wicked!

Eveline rose from the couch on which she

had thrown herself, bathed her face, and descended to receive her visitor.

A letter was lying conspicuously on the table. Her eye caught the well-known handwriting, and the blood deserted her face as she recognised it, but she rallied with a courage worthy a better cause, and came forward to greet her guest in her usual cordial manner.

Other people dropped in to luncheon, and save that Mrs. Greville was unusually pale, and that the large white eyelids were a trifle swollen and heavy, no one would have guessed the wounded heart that lay beneath that calm, gentle exterior—Cæsar covered his face with his mantle to hide the agony of his death-wound.

But oh! the pain that was gnawing at her gentle, loving, trusting heart! Many a woman, methinks, can tell what were the sufferings that the Spartan boy bore in silence.

Not a moment to herself to collect her thoughts, nor to read the letter he had left for her. Visitors followed each other, and the duchess called for her before she could even think what she was to do. She was like one stunned, who, though conscious, still sees everything whirling around. She could only recollect that he—the adored—had fallen

from his pedestal, and had asked—*what?*—*Her dishonour.*

Thrusting the unopened letter in her bosom, she joined the duchess in her carriage.

"I suppose that affair is settled," said one of the *élégants*, who leant against the rails as the Duchess of Montserrat's well-appointed carriage swept round the corner; "Plantagenet is a deuced lucky fellow. By Jove! those are good horses."

"For an accepted lover he looked uncommonly down-in-the-mouth this morning," said another; "I believe the Greville refused him."

"Shouldn't wonder," said a third; "she refused Ticehurst last week—know it for a fact."

"There goes Lady Gwen with that black brute of hers" (meaning Sir Humphrey Pierce), said the first speaker, taking off his hat as they rode past.

"I hear she has the whip hand of him—Lady Gwen always had a devil of a temper."

"So has Pierce, for that matter; it will be a drawn battle between them."

"I'll back the woman."

"That's right, old fellow—always stand up for the weaker sex," said Jack Darrell, catch-

ing the last words as he joined the crowd. "I've just been talking to Florence Twyrrhitt —you remember the little Kinnaird girl, who lived at the Okehamptons'? She made rather a mistake in marrying the old chap."

"Did she tell you so, Jack?"

"Thereabouts."

"Poor old Twyrrhitt! I should think *he* has found out *his* mistake, too, by this time. She was the veriest little devil I ever knew."

"Has any one seen Challenor, lately?"

"No; he sticks to the house closer than ever."

"Not much inducement to stick to his own. Did you ever see his wife?"

"Yes: and don't care if I never see her again."

"This is very kind of you, taking me out to-day, after what happened last night," said Eveline to the duchess, as they joined the line; she spoke wistfully, and laid her hand on her friend's.

"To be frank with you, I had two reasons. One, that I wished you to feel that our relations were to remain the same; and the other, that people should not think that my boy had been discomfited: for if declarations are made so much *en evidence,* people will talk."

"I am so sorry—so very sorry," began Eveline, penitently.

"And is there no hope for him?" A wistful look came into the duchess's eyes as she spoke.

Eveline shook her head—"My dear friend, I shall never marry again."

"A resolution not likely to be kept," said the other, with a smile.

"I think it will," replied Eveline.

"So you think, now; but you are too young not to love again."

A vivid blush here dyed her companion's face; and as Frank Lovell bowed at that moment, the duchess not unnaturally attributed the sudden emotion of her young friend to his appearance; but the blush died away, and Eveline carelessly gave her hand to the young man who came up to the barouche, now drawn up under a tree in the drive. Other men lingered near, all anxious to win a smile from, "By Jove! the prettiest woman in London;" but Eveline was very *distraite*, and if her smile was sweet—it could not be otherwise—it was vacant; so much so, that a Mr. Cleveland—supposed to be a great judge of female beauty—who had just been introduced, said afterwards, "Very lovely, and very silly."

"Shall you be at Lady Gwen's to-night?" asked Mr. Lovell.

Again that vivid blush and embarrassed manner, which again puzzled the duchess—she had not seen Mrs. Vandeleur's carriage pass by with Mr. Vandeleur by her side—Eveline had.

"I may look in after the opera. Lady Okehampton has lent me her box, and I have promised to take Mrs. Twyrrhitt."

"Has anything been heard of the Gavestons?" asked some one.

"Yes. I heard from her this morning," said Eveline; "they are not coming to town at all, but stay in Germany till August, when they go to Scotland."

"Hurstmonceaux writes he has been with them in Switzerland," said the duchess, "and that he never saw any one so improved as she is."

"Pamela is one in a thousand," cried Eveline, warmly; "she had got into a trick of being satirical, but she has the warmest—the truest heart, and she is so happy now that she sees things more *en couleur de rose*."

"Surely she was not unhappy at home?" said the duchess.

"Far from it, but do you not think there is

a great difference in being happy in a general way, and being necessary to only one—filling that one life with glad sunshine? And Pamela can love very deeply. Can any happiness equal that of married life, where both love? Where each looks to the other for help, sympathy, comfort, in every thought and want? Where neither cares to look further than the legitimate partner of its heart for that affection which is so precious to receive and requite, and so hard to live without?" there were tears in her eyes as she uttered these words as they drove slowly down the Row.

"And yet one that you will not tempt again; perhaps you are right, but you must have been many years younger than Colonel Greville—thirty years at least—and however loyally a wife may love a husband so much her senior, it is hardly with the all-absorbing, romantic feeling that you speak of, and which you are young enough to feel."

"And yet I loved him dearly. Would to God he were with me still!"

The piteous ring in her voice—the cry as it were of one drowning calling for help—the sudden clasping of her hands, the spasm that for a moment drew her face, all told the duchess—a good judge of human nature—that

this was more than a moan for the dead, and with mute sympathy she gently laid her hand on Eveline's, as though to recall her to herself.

The Park was no place for explanations, so she quietly changed the subject.

"The season is drawing to a close—what is your verdict? Favourable or not favourable?" said the duchess.

Eveline, feeling how nearly she had betrayed herself, rallied in a moment, and with a quick, grateful pressure of her friend's hand, replied,

"If excitement be pleasure, my verdict is favourable; but I confess to longing to be back among my Welsh hills, if only for time to think over the whirl that I have been living in."

"Popularity must pay its penalty. You will not long be allowed to remain in your solitude, your friends will expect to see you. I for one look forward to seeing you at Rossmoor this autumn—you will pay the Gavestons a visit, and Lord Okehampton counts on you this winter."

"A visit to you, dear duchess, is always a pleasure," said Eveline, affectionately. "How well I remember the month I spent with you! It seems but yesterday, and yet so long ago!"

"Often the case when we have lived much

during any given interval, and past impressions have been vivid; yet it was a very quiet visit."

"Its greatest charm. Would that I could have a quiet evening with you to-night!"

"Why to-night, dear child?" asked her friend, seeing there was trouble weighing on her favourite's mind.

The terrible scene of the morning rose before Mrs. Greville at the kindly voice. The letter that lay unread in her bosom seemed to scorch her. What might it not contain? Not more entreaties. God forbid. Since that fearful night at the Cottage everything had contributed to calm her fears and lull her conscience —she had tried, and in a measure had succeeded, in persuading herself that Vandeleur's affection was that of a brother, and that as a sister she loved him—but now the veil was torn from her eyes a second time, and she saw the yawning chasm before her, with its whirlpool below, threatening to engulph her. She turned to the duchess a terrified look—the look of a hunted animal. The duchess, alarmed, exclaimed—

"My dear Eveline! what *is* the matter?"

The question recalled her. What, tell her friend that a married man loved her?—that

she loved him? Ah! heaven! let the earth open and swallow her up first!

She recovered herself with an effort, and fell back on a woman's excuse. She was ill.

"You do indeed look ill—you have been doing too much, I shall take you home. To Lowndes Square," she said to the footman. "When will you come and spend a quiet evening with me? To-morrow?"

"To-morrow I dine at the Pierrepoints, and I go to the Queen's ball afterwards."

"The next day *I* am engaged," said the duchess; and on comparing notes it was found that every day and every night were full.

"This is Tuesday, and we leave on Monday; try and come to us on Sunday; and remember, dear child, that in all the events of life, a friend, older than one's self, is a useful counsellor; and though you refuse to be really my daughter, you are none the less dear to me."

Had they been alone, in the privacy of their room, Eveline would have thrown herself in her arms—told her all—and trusted to her as to a mother; but the carriage had stopped in Lowndes Square, the duchess had kissed her, and the footman had let down the steps.

Eveline could not speak, her heart was too

full, but in her quick, impulsive way, she caught her friend's hand to her lips, and sprang out of the carriage.

"That child has something on her mind," was her grace's soliloquy, as she drove away. "Of course it is a man; but who I cannot conceive—I have never seen her show the smallest preference for any one. I must try and see her to-morrow. She is a sweet woman; I wish she could have liked my boy," and the duchess sighed as she leant back in the soft, well-stuffed carriage.

Eveline rushed to her room and locked the door.

Alone at last! a moment's breathing time wherein to collect her scared and scattered senses.

The whole fabric that she had been building up for the last two months had been swept away, and she stood there alone, face to face with her peril. And she loved him!

"Oh! mother, mother! come back to me; save me, oh mother! save me!" went up in a piteous cry, as, weeping passionately, she flung herself on her knees.

Who would help her in her sore need? Where fly for safety?

The duchess. Who so kind and motherly

as she ? seemed to say some inner voice, and acting on the impulse she hastily tied on the bonnet she had thrown off, hid her tear-stained face under a thick veil, ran down stairs, and was hurrying out of the house, when the footman, who was standing in the open doorway, asked if he were to go with her.

"No, thank you," she replied, "I am only going to Belgrave Square."

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but if it is to her grace's, I heard the duchess give orders to drive to Paddington to meet his grace."

"Are you sure?" said Eveline, with a sudden *serrement de cœur*.

"Quite sure, ma'am; I saw the carriage turn and drive towards the Park."

On how small a thing do the great events of life sometimes hinge!

It was a lovely evening, a cool breeze had sprung up after a sultry day, and it occurred to the duchess that she would do a conjugal duty, and meet the duke herself. With a sinking heart Eveline crept back to her room —shivering—shuddering—feeling in the extremity of danger, and knowing that no human aid was at hand. The whirlpool had seized her—she felt the awful current drawing her nearer and nearer to destruction, and was

powerless. She sank a heap on the floor, wringing her hands and moaning.

Choking for want of air, she unloosened her dress at the throat, and the letter fell from her bosom. She had forgotten it. A ray of hope came to her. With a woman's utter trust in the man she loves, she hurriedly tore it open.

He was so good—so true. He would save her—he would never utter such mad words again. No! no! he never meant them.

Thus murmuring, she pressed the letter to her lips, with a mute reliance on her idol.

But she had not read many lines, when, crushing the letter up in her hands, she fell, sobbing, cowering to the ground.

And yet she could not hate him. Hate him? Was he not dearer than life to her? Was not the very air he breathed, the things he touched, sacred to her? Hate him? Oh! God, that she could!

"What is it?" she asked, querulously, as a knock at the door roused her.

It was the inexorable Jones come to dress her.

"I can't go out to-night—I am ill. Send word to Mrs. Twyrrhitt, with my compliments —send the carriage, and beg her to make what use she likes of it."

In a few minutes another knock.

"Dinner is ready, ma'am, won't you take some dinner?"

"No! no! I want nothing but to be left alone."

Jones went down to give her orders, saying to the butler she was sure that her mistress was ill, she was quite cross-like, she, sweet-tempered as an angel, too, in a general way.

"Is Charles to take the message round now, or wait for the carriage? It is ordered at eight," said the butler.

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Mrs. Jones; "ladies like to be *shaperooned*, Mr. King, and maybe Mrs. Twyrrhitt will want to find a lady; it is better than half-past seven, perhaps you had better send Charles."

So Charles was despatched, and he returned with a note.

"*Dear* Mrs. Greville," (so it ran, with much underlining of words.) "It is *so* kind of you lending me your carriage, and giving me your box. Mr. Twyrrhitt is engaged, and *will not* let me go *without* a lady (you know how *absurdly* particular he is); and at this *late* hour I really do not know *where* to find one. I am *so* sorry you are ill, but don't you think a little *camphor* or sal volatile, would do you

good? It is such an *excellent* thing for a head-ache, and you looked *so blooming* in the *Park*, that I *hope* you will be well enough to come. At all events I shall come and see, for if you do not go I *must* give up the Opera.

"Yours affectionately,

"FLORENCE."

Camphor julep and sal volatile for a breaking heart, and a soul on the brink of perdition! Ladies, remember the recipe.

"I suppose I must go," said Eveline, wearily, on reading the note. "Well, she has not many pleasures, and it is only one struggle more. Is it time to dress?"

"Ten minutes past eight," was the abigail's answer. "You don't look fit to go out to-night," she added, as her mistress gave herself up to her hands.

"I am not, indeed; but Mrs. Twyrrhitt has no one to go with her."

"Let me fetch you a glass of wine, you look quite faint."

"No, thank you," said Eveline, with a shudder.

"Mrs. Twyrrhitt is in the drawing-room, ma'am," said a man-servant, knocking at the door, as Jones put the finishing touch to

a toilette to which her mistress had given no heed.

She asked for a cup of strong tea, and then went down with a smile on her pale lips.

A well-bred woman's heart may break, but her face shall not show it—she will bear herself proudly to the last in public—cover her face with her mantle, and never show the death-agony.

"I was sure the camphor would do you good," said Florence, coming forward. "I am so glad you are better; and what a lovely gown!"

"Is it?" said Eveline, absently; "shall we go? we are late already."

Mrs. Twyrrhitt chattered all through the drive, but Eveline heard her not; every sense was numbed, crushed in that of suffering.

Mr. Digby was already in the box, and their other cavalier soon after came in.

Mrs. Greville drew the curtain and sat behind it, hoping to escape being seen from the pit, or other boxes.

What ill luck could have taken Vandeleur to the opera that night? He, who so rarely went, unless to join her party; but there he was in a stall. There was no mistaking—not

to Eveline at least—that curly brown head and sunburnt neck.

He must not see her.

"Mr. Digby, will you change places with me? The glare makes my head ache."

They changed places, and she hid herself in the darkest corner of the box, from whence, unseen herself, she could watch Vandeleur. As the curtain fell on the first act, she saw him stand up, reconnoitre the house, and then leave his stall.

Her heart throbbed to suffocation, and each time that the door opened to let in the visitors who crowded in her box, a deadly faintness stole over her.

She was spared that time. The interlude was over, and she presently saw Vandeleur with others resume their seats in the stalls. Then she saw his neighbour speak to him, and Vandeleur instantly turned round and fixed his *lorgnon* on her box and then said something to his friend. This latter turned his head and she recognised one of the late visitors to her box.

It was all over with her, and with a low moan her head dropped forward on her bosom.

"I am afraid you are ill," said Digby, with much concern.

"Rather faint. Please open the door."

"Had you not better go home?" said he.

"If you would take me home—in a cab—anyhow—I should be very grateful. I am ill."

"Oh! Mrs. Greville, please don't go, for if you do I must," cried Florence. "Here, drink some eau de cologne. You will be better directly."

Digby darted a glance, which, if glances could kill, would have annihilated Mrs. Twyrrhitt on the spot, and implored Mrs. Greville to go home; but seeing Florence's disappointment, she rallied with a mighty effort, and said, looking white as death the while, that she was better, and could stay on. What it cost her to stay, she only knew; for she knew that Vandeleur would come to her box in the next *entr'acte*, and her terror was so great that her whole frame shook with the heavy beating of her heart—an agitation which was not lessened when the door opened and he entered.

"You are quite behind the scenes to-night," said he, little dreaming the agony that rent her soul.

A *liaison* was no new thing to him, and maddened as he was by his feelings for her, he could not understand that *her* heart was breaking. *He* only felt joy at seeing her again. He sat down close to her, and perceived, for the first time, how deadly pale she was, and he was all tenderness at once.

"You look ill, my precious one. Did you get my letter?" he whispered.

She looked up at him, a strange, frightened look in her tender eyes. He did not understand it, but saw that deep love battled with her emotion.

A keen reader of human nature says,—

"Il y a un égoïsme affreux dans la passion, quelqu'en soit le genre et l'objet. L'amour, plus impitoyable que la haîne, immole sans hésiter tout ce qui se trouve entre lui et son idole."

Vandeleur proved it. He thought of nothing but himself and his love for her.

"My own, my sweet one," whispered he, utterly forgetting his vow never to use such epithets to her, "what is it?—tell me."

His low passionate accents were unheard by all but her to whom they were addressed, in the rather noisy laughter of Florence and the men who were talking to her.

Eveline could not answer him. A knot in her throat choked her utterance.

"Dearest, *dearest*, you are not angry with me, are you?" and in the darkness of the corner he slipped his arm round her, and he felt the rapid bounding of her heart.

The door opened, and Frank Lovell entered. She turned to greet him, and no one knew—so quietly had the above scene passed—of the tragedy going on in the corner of that small opera box!

The curtain drew up, and Vandeleur was obliged to leave; but he was waiting in the corridor, when the opera was over, to see her to her carriage. But she had taken Digby's arm—she dared not trust herself alone again with him, and he had to content himself with walking at her side. He heard the order for Lady Gwen's, and pacified himself with the thought that he would meet her there.

It required no little amount of heroism on Mrs. Greville's part to listen to her companion's bitter complaints of her former patroness, Lady Gwen, as they drove to Grosvenor Square.

"Only a little longer," she kept saying to herself, as she tried to force herself to answer these trivial grievances.

"This is the first thing she has asked me to. No one would believe how she has neglected me."

"I thought you had a large circle in London," replied Eveline; "you used to say that you liked a season in town."

"So I did, and so I should now if Lady Okehampton took me out as she used to do," said Mrs. Twyrrhitt; "but it is very different now. The men I knew then were dancing men; and as I am never asked to balls now, *they* are not of much use."

"But your husband's friends," suggested Eveline; "why not make a circle among them? A bright little woman like you could easily make herself the centre of a very pleasant set."

"Such a humdrum lot!" replied Florence, shrugging her shoulders; "excellent folk, I dare say—people who dine at six o'clock—don't you know the thing? Only fancy what Gwen said to me the other day. I begged her to get me an invitation to M —— House—and she could have done it so easily—and her answer was, 'I never ask favours from any one, nor for any one,' and to think Gwen and I were such friends!"

Eveline told her how difficult it was to get

invitations, and tried to comfort her, and promised to introduce her to Lady Harmer if she saw her—she was going to give a ball the next day.

"If Mr. Twyrrhitt would only let me go out by myself, I dare say I should get asked," said Florence; "but he is so ridiculous about this."

"You should rather be grateful for the affection that takes such care of you," said Eveline, gently.

But Florence had married an old man for his money, and for the position which she had hoped to attain thereby, and was not likely to understand or appreciate the gentle reproof.

She had been bitterly mortified, too, when she found out too late that Mr. Twyrrhitt had but twelve hundred a-year and a will of his own.

She kicked against the yoke, and having neither high principle nor affection for her husband, matters began to look rather ugly.

The carriage drew up at their destination, so all further conversation stopped.

Lady Gwendoline Pierce stood on the landing receiving her guests—a crowd of men round her—a very Titania with her train.

Though late in the season, it was the first

ball she had given—a return civility to the overwhelming invitations that had poured in on her taking possession of her new house, one of the finest in Grosvenor Square.

Her dress, fresh from Paris, was, needless to say, most becoming. The *sang de bœuf* coloured satin, softened by a profusion of Brussels lace, contrasted well with the white skin and flaxen hair, and showed to advantage the splendid diamonds that blazed all about her, glittering like a shower of stars whenever she moved.

Pierce stood near her, proud of the exquisite little fairy who was now mistress of his house, and who was receiving her guests with the air of a queen, condescendingly allowing her subjects to come and do homage.

As soon as Eveline saw that Florence was claimed for one or two dances, she told her that she was going home, but would send the carriage back for her.

She dreaded meeting Vandeleur again—dreaded it with the worst of all terrors—the terror of love; and seeing Lord Okehampton, she clung to his arm, begging him to put her in her carriage as she was too ill to stay any longer.

On the stairs they came face to face with

the very man she was trying to avoid! Lord Okehampton felt his companion's arm tremble and cling more closely to his. He turned kindly to her, and expressed his sorrow at seeing her so suffering.

Vandeleur turned to go down with them.

"Going so early?" said he.

"Mrs. Greville has been overdoing it, I expect," said Lord Okehampton; "she looks quite unfit to be here."

A gentleman here overtook them with a message from Lady Gwen to her father, begging him to come back at once as the Prince de B—— was desirous of being introduced.

"I am so sorry, my dear Mrs. Greville, but will you excuse me? Vandeleur will put you in your carriage. I shall come and see how you are in the morning." And shaking hands, he left her in Vandeleur's care.

Fate was against her. All her efforts to avoid him that day had proved abortive. Silent, faint, and trembling, she clung to his arm as they slowly made their way down against the up-coming stream.

He could not but mark her terrible agitation, and his hopes rose high and tumultuous. He went to look for her carriage, but not

finding it, he put her into a friend's brougham which happened to be at the door. Jumping in after her, he bade the man drive to Lowndes Square.

As the gas-lamps threw their light into the carriage, he was shocked to see how fearfully ill she looked. Those few hours of mental suffering had made sad havoc with the fair young face, which was drawn and pinched and deadly white; and months of ill-health could not have furrowed those livid circles round her eyes so deeply as had those dozen hours of a heart's struggle.

The strain all day had been too great; her strength gave way, and she had no physical power either to resist his tenderness or to speak; and in an agony of love and sorrow, she hid her face on his breast.

He little thought what was passing in the heart that throbbed so heavily against his wildly beating one; all his thoughts merged in the delicious certainty that she loved him.

The carriage turned into Lowndes Square.

"Just home, darling," said he.

"Home?" she repeated, vaguely, as one in a dream, and lifting her head. Then gazing on him for a moment with despair written on her every feature, she pressed one fervent kiss

on his lips, and asked him to give her his blessing.

"My blessing?" said he. "Why, I bless you every hour of the day, and love you—ay, better than life!"

The carriage stopped, the door opened, and before he could pass her to get out and help her, she had sprung on to the pavement and had disappeared into the house, and he drove back to Lady Gwen's with a delicious recollection of the wild kiss which she had pressed on his lips, and thought of the morrow!

CHAPTER IX.

"Oh! banishment! eternal banishment!
Ne'er to return? Must we ne'er meet again?
My heart will break!"

OTWAY.

"MRS. GREVILLE at home?" asked Vandeleur, the next day, as he knocked at her door.

"Mrs. Greville went to Wales this morning by the ten o'clock train, sir," said the butler.

"To Wales?" he repeated, astounded. "But I suppose she is coming back?"

"I believe not, sir; my mistress left orders for the servants to follow as soon as possible," said the butler, without the least symptom of surprise. Had Eveline gone out for half-an-hour, or taken a trip to Kamtschatka, that well-bred servant would have replied with the same perfect calmness.

"Gone!" said Vandeleur to himself, as he

turned away, "and without a word? What can it mean?"

Possibly a letter might be waiting him at his club: anyhow, he would go and see.

Yes, there was. She could not part from him without bidding him farewell.

"Foolish, foolish child!" said he, sitting down at once to write her a tender, loving reproach, telling her she had taken the light out of his life by her unkind, unjust step, and much more rhapsody to the same effect.

And Eveline, her heart bowed down with sorrow and humiliation, and half broken with the strife she had gone through, was speeding home away from him—away from all that she now knew made life only too dear to her.

> "Alas! the love of woman! it is known
> To be a lovely and a fearful thing."

And only those who have loved can understand poor Eveline's misery, which not all her sense of honour, nor her consciousness of right doing could mitigate.

She had done right—she knew that; she had fled while yet she could raise her front in guiltlessness, but could that stay the anguish? could that people the world once more to her?

The wound was still too sore to admit of any such healing balm. Her life lay spread before her—a hopeless blank. She wandered, like one in a dream, from room to room—from house to garden—from garden to house again—unhinged, worn out, incapable of thought. Night came at last, and she slept the heavy sleep of exhaustion, knowing that the morrow would be but a repetition of to-day, and so on through all the morrows till death should release her.

Her one ray of comfort was in an instinctive knowledge that *he* would not suffer as she was suffering. Their separation would be a sharp pang to him; but he would get over it, and be happy again; and, as woman's love is ever unselfish, she took comfort from this.

And then came his letter, full of reproach, yet speaking words of comfort, telling her that she had fled from a shadow, and that he should come down and prove it to her. He did go down for a few hours, and, with a sternness she had never heard in his voice before, made her swear that she would never flee from him again. Weeping, terrified, she gave the promise.

"You will never mistrust me again, will you?" said he, as he left.

It was death to doubt—heaven to believe; and though her heart belied the trembling "No" that he kissed off her lips, still she uttered the required assurance, and he left her calmer than he had found her, though her resolution of never seeing him again was unshaken.

Some writer says that a woman is never in so much danger as when her lover tries to save her from it. Be this as it may, Eveline was comforted by Vandeleur's words, and once more went about her simple duties with as brave a spirit as she could bring to the front. It is true she was very saddened, and all her bright joyousness was gone; but the peace that well-doing always brings began to shed its holy balm on her wounded heart.

CHAPTER X.

"Discord! dire sister of the slaughter'd power,
Small at her birth, but rising ev'ry hour."

POPE.

MISS WILSON was paying a farewell visit to Mrs. Vandeleur, with whom she had contrived to get on intimate terms, and, thanks to her good offices, Mr. Vandeleur's home was more ungenial than ever, for she lost no opportunity of augmenting his wife's suspicions of him with regard to Mrs. Greville.

Vandeleur had never been other than courteous, kind, and attentive to his wife; and of late it was with an odd kind of remorse that he sought, by increased kindness, to atone in some measure for having given to another the affection which he owed Mrs. Vandeleur, but which, alas! she had never deemed it necessary to try and keep.

To keep by artful measures that which was hers by prescriptive right! Not she. She would not condescend to such artifices; and this sentiment was cunningly kept alive by her *friend*, Miss Wilson, whose whispers made her receive with cold and distant *hauteur* her husband's attempts at a more kindly understanding.

In this Vandeleur showed his French origin; for it is always a matter of surprise to our neighbours over the water, that when an Englishman loves another woman better than his wife, he must needs maltreat this latter.

I was once travelling in a railway carriage with two gentlemen, one of whom was a Frenchman.

"C'est étonnant," said this latter, "du moins en traite une femme avec politesse, même la sienne; mais dès que vous trompez les vôtres, vous vous croyez obliger de vous conduire en chien envers elles. C'est pas bien —c'est malhonnête."

The Englishman replied, "It savoured of hypocrisy to show kindness and affection to one you were deceiving."

"Dame!" said the other; "on ne parle pas d'amour, but at least you can be polite, atten-

tive, even kind; but," he added, with that expressive shrug which conveys so much, "you English, you are incomprehensible; what with your candour and sincerity, you are perfect ogres!"

"I doubt how far an English wife would appreciate such attentions," said the other, drily, "especially if she found out the reason."

"Ah! si ça leur convient," said the Frenchman, with another shrug, and throwing his hands outwards from the wrists, as much as to say, "That settles it."

I here arrived at my station, so do not know if either convinced the other; probably not.

Mr. Vandeleur was evidently of the Frenchman's opinion; and it is possible that, had it not been for Miss Wilson's good offices, he might have softened his wife's austerity, and matters would have gone more happily, not only with them, but with Eveline; for, had his wife been kind and gentle, I think that his love for Eveline would have passed away, instead of being confirmed by the bitter hardness which met him at home. Jealousy is always trying; but when it exists without love, it becomes the demon of a household.

"I hear you have taken Mrs. Greville's fishing," said Miss Wilson, amiably.

"I am not aware that Mrs. Greville has any fishing; certainly I have taken none from her," replied Vandeleur, coldly.

"Where is the new fishing ground you rented this year?" asked his wife, in her hard, cutting voice, and lifting her cold face as she spoke.

"On the Usk," he replied, gently. "I rent Mr. Owen's ground, and have more than once asked you to come with me. Mrs. Greville has, I know, begged you to be her guest; her house is some distance from the fishing, but charmingly situated."

"Not very far, I fancy," said Miss Wilson, suavely; "for I have seen some of her sketches of the river."

"Very possibly. I have seen sketches of places not exactly within sight of one's own house," answered Vandeleur, drily, and resuming his book.

"It must be so pleasant for Mrs. Greville your having the fishing," pursued Constance; "for, poor thing, I fancy she leads a very lonely life in Wales, and it is such a comfort to have a gentleman friend at hand."

"Have *you* found it so?" asked Vandeleur, grimly.

"*I?* Oh! I am different. I only care for one female friend, whom I can look up to—" Miss Wilson here suited the action to the word, and cast a venerating glance at Mrs. Vandeleur—"but then I am very fortunate—too fortunate to care about—he! he!—*gentlemen* friends."

Vandeleur made no response.

Miss Wilson followed Mrs. Vandeleur to the farther end of the room, speaking in a low voice.

"It is not for me to offer advice to you—you, who always know the right thing to do; but I do think it would be kind if you went to stay with her. I hear—but never mind that—only I *do* think that your sweet, holy example would be of incalculable benefit to one so giddy as she is. It is so foolish of her to encourage your husband as she does. With such a wife as he has, of course it is ridiculous to talk of *danger* to him; but, still, it is bad taste, and men will be men." Miss Wilson announced this self-evident proposition with a knowing little laugh. "But I must be off, or I shall miss my train. Farewell, my sweet friend; *do* write to me sometimes,

and don't let *me* make you hard on Mrs. Greville; for what man, having *you* for a wife, could ever cast a thought on any other woman? Once more, adieu. Good-bye, Mr. Vandeleur. I hope you will have good sport down in Wales. I suppose you know Mrs. Greville has gone down?"

"I hope I shall. I hear the river is in excellent order."

"Do you mean to say you like that woman?" asked he of his wife, when they were alone. "I tell you frankly, I do not; and in future if you will be good enough to let me know when she is coming, I will take care to be out of the way."

"I suppose there is more truth in what she says than you care to hear," said his wife grimly.

"I do not understand you; what do you mean?"

"I do not know why you should be so out of temper with my poor friend—a most excellent person—unless indeed she hit the mark too nearly. I am not *quite* ignorant of your intimacy with Mrs. Greville."

"Nor is any one. I like and admire Mrs. Greville, and I must say it would be far

better to make her your friend, instead of Miss Wilson."

"Thank you, I prefer choosing my own friends; the flirting women *you* take up, are not much in *my* line."

"I am sorry you should speak to me in that tone," said her husband very quietly, "but come, do not let this mischief-making woman cause dissension between us."

"Of course you abuse *my* friends, I am accustomed to that," replied his wife, in the tone of a martyr.

"I am not aware that I ever did so before. I do not like Miss Wilson. Ask Okehampton what he thinks of her. He says she shall never enter his house again, and were this *my* house I should say the same."

"I can easily understand *his* not liking so high principled a person."

"You are going rather too far, Sarah," said her husband, getting up. "Okehampton is one of my oldest friends."

"I never said that he was not," she replied icily.

An impatient exclamation escaped the other, and he left the room.

When he returned at dinner-time he was in perfect good humour again, and brought

with him a beautifully bound edition of some work which he had heard his wife say she would like to have. He went to her dressing-room with it.

She was as frigid as marble, and scarcely glancing at the books, said,

"Thank you, but I bought the work to-day in a more serviceable garb than that white and gold. Lucy, put that bow higher up. I am never taken with outward appearances."

Vandeleur stalked out of the room very much offended. Ten minutes later his wife was waiting in the library, with her father and mother, for dinner. It was announced.

"Let Mr. Vandeleur know," said *madame.*

"Mr. Vandeleur is dining at his club, ma'am," said the butler; "he went five minutes ago."

Mrs. Vandeleur was excessively angry. To be thus humiliated before her servants was too bad.

"One of Henry's tempers," she said, sighing; "come, papa, let us go to dinner."

Such scenes as these are not calculated to win a man from a gentle, loving woman, whose bright smile of welcome chases away the cloud on his brow,—who is indeed the sunshine of his life. Wives generally appear

to think that it is derogatory to try and win back a husband by love and tenderness, and yet, methinks, such agencies would be more powerful than frowns and scoldings. And there is another reason—rather a mortifying one for us—why a man can be more easily weaned from his love than ourselves, and that is, that he loves the sex more than the individual, and the sweet, loving smiles of one woman speedily efface those of another.

I dare say "spinsters' husbands" may be classed among "bachelors' wives," but still I do believe in that spark of generosity, latent in almost every man's breast, which a wife's love can fan to a flame, and which will bring the rover back in silent penitence to the bright, smiling home.

What says Katharine?

> "A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
> Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
> And while it is so, none so dry and thirsty
> Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it."

Why cannot wives remember this? I have heard some say that under certain circumstances it is impossible; yet, methinks, with love and forbearance all things are possible.

Ay! forbearance! There's the rub! the "open sesame" to domestic peace, which,

like Cassim, we forget when most we need it!

But I am digressing, and women will be furious with me, and ask, not unnaturally, What can I, a nun, a spinster, a sister of mercy, know of such things?

True, dear reader, I have not been tried; and perhaps in my ignorance, I "pronounce without dismay" where, had I more knowledge, I should "creep, and feel my way;" and am "decisive, clear, and strong" only because I have "no means of knowing right from wrong." But sisters of mercy see a great deal of life; and we all know that lookers-on see more of the play than the actors.

CHAPTER XI.

"Mightier far
Than strength of nerve, or sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun and star
Is love, tho' oft to agony distrest,
And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's breast."

WORDSWORTH.

"There in a moment we may plunge our years
In fatal penitence, and in the blight
Of our own souls, turn our blood to tears,
And colour things to come with hues of night."

BYRON.

Too sadly true are Wordsworth's words! Has not their truth been exemplified again and again in the world's history? proved by death, by madness, by the sacrifice of all that makes earth lovely and heaven attainable?

All powerful, love rules its victims with a despotism that knows no mercy, acknowledges no other sway.

Eveline's unhappy love for Vandeleur had become the master passion of her soul; she was as a child in a giant's grasp, in which it vainly wrestles to be free. Her only hope, but yet despair, had been in flight—in resolving never to see him again. Once before she had yielded her woman's instinct to his judgment, and this was the result!

Let them never meet again. Though life be darkened, and sunshine gone, better a life of darkness than to meet again.

She knew it, she felt it daily more and more, but durst not write it to him, well knowing that such words would at once bring him to her side. She had promised with that mute, trembling obedience which a woman yields to the stern command of the one who has become the master of her soul, never to flee from him again; and, woman-like, the remembrance of that tearful promise rose before her.

"To be kept?" asked conscience.

"A promise, remember!" said the tempter. "He will never forgive!"

Warring thus, her health, never strong, succumbed; and matters being taken out of her own hands, she thankfully obeyed the doctor's mandate of seeking change of air. A

few days before Vandeleur was to arrive for his fishing, she went to Bournemouth.

In those days that charming sea-side place was little known. Remote, difficult of access, she felt sure that Vandeleur's engagements would preclude his being able to go so far, at all events, for the present; and in a month, at farthest, Pamela would be home, and Eveline would then go to her and be safe. Yes, Pamela would save her; she knew that, and she would have written to her but that all a woman's pride and modesty revolted at the bare thought of acknowledging with pen and ink that she loved—*a married man!* But Pamela would understand at a word—would gather her in her arms even as a mother would —would ask no questions, but would save her.

There was peace in the thought, and peace in the knowledge that Vandeleur could not come to her where she was, for he had written tenderly reproaching her for seeking so remote a *locale,* which it was next to impossible for him to find an excuse for visiting in order to assure himself that she was really getting well, as she said she was.

This knowledge gave her a feeling of security; and, lulled from her haunting terrors, she grew calmer.

Days slipped by—slow, monotonous days—broken only by his letters, which would be to her as daily bread till Pamela came, and then all would be over; but till then they would be to her as the last lingering rays of sunshine are to the prisoner who is about to be immured in hopeless, endless darkness; for such she knew her life would be without him; "and yet," she said, shivering, "even worse darkness *with* him."

Each letter brought the last one nearer, for when Pamela came, she knew that a gulf—even such a gulf as separates the dead from the living—would separate her from Vandeleur; and that not only would she never hear from him again, but that Pamela would make her destroy, as deadly poison, every letter or relic connected with him; and she knew that Pamela would be right; but, unaided, she had not strength for this sacrifice; and so, meantime, his letters were conned over as she sat by the sea-shore, or still more often as she lay on her sofa, which she was too weak to leave for long; for without any visible ailment, *elle déperissait à vue d'œil.* The beautiful cheek lost its roundness, the large eyes grew larger and too lustrous, the blue veins showed like delicate network beneath the fair

skin that daily grew more transparent; but she felt no pain. Unequal to any exertion, she hardly remarked the dulness around her, or, if she did, it was but to feel grateful for the rest—a rest which allowed her to lie near the open window from morning till night, dreaming of him, with no one—nothing—to disturb her while listening to the monotonous murmur of the waves, and wonder if death were near. She hoped it was.

Life was very sad and lonely. If only she had a sister—some one—on whom she could lavish some portion of the deep love that lie buried in her heart! But she had no one. She began to count the days till Pamela should come, though in her weak state the monotony of her life was not unpleasant.

But this repose, so grateful to an invalid, was becoming extremely irksome to the abigail, who at last plainly told her mistress that it was no place for a sick person.

"Why, even the waiters, as they call them, are but slips of girls; and there is no one worth mentioning in the hotel besides you, ma'am. Now, Brighton—"

"It suits me, Jones," interrupted her mistress, gently, but in a tone that admitted of no argument; "but I can easily understand

that it is very dull for you. I have long promised you a holiday, and have not been able to give you one, but I can spare you now if you like. I shall be here for another fortnight, and can easily manage without you."

Jones was touched by the kindness of her gentle mistress, and after being again assured that she could be spared, joyously set out to see her own people.

It was an intensely hot day in the middle of August, but it cooled down towards sunset. Exhausted by the sultry heat of the weather, Eveline was now enjoying the fresh breeze of the evening hour, as she reposed on her sofa, which was drawn, as usual, to the open window overlooking the sea.

The moon was up, full and bright, in a cloudless sky, shedding her silvery beams on the tremulous waves, which glistened and sparkled as they coquetted with the pure, unwavering light that fell in one broad mass, widening as it reached the shore.

Very fragile looked Eveline in that pale light, but oh! how lovely, though with a beauty scarce of earth.

Her long, beautiful hair—of that rich bright gold colour which so rarely outlives childhood—was unbound to relieve her temples of the

weight, and it fell curling and waving till, flowing over the back of the sofa, it lay in golden rings on the floor. Her soft, muslin wrapper, fastened by a broad, white satin ribbon round her slender waist, and with its long, hanging sleeves, softened by lace, the whiteness of which was shamed by the bosom and arms it shaded, was so spotless—she herself so white—her surroundings so pure—that to a poetical fancy she looked like a stray moonbeam caught and retained by earth.

The faintest colour—scarce as much as one may see on the inside petals of a blush rose—just tinged the soft cheek, which, if it had lost some of its roundness, was not less beautiful; the hair was pushed back from the transparent temples, and in the large, violet eyes upturned to heaven, and swimming in half-shed tears, the brilliant orb of night mirrored herself as she floated through the dark blue ether, gazing with love and pity on this fair child of earth.

The soft splash of the summer waves, singing nature's sweetest lullaby, fell in murmuring accents on the moonlit shore: not another sound was heard: all else was still: the restless ocean alone lived, speaking, as in her fanciful mood Eveline thought, tenderly, as

with a mother's voice to her aching heart—speaking words of peace, of eternity, of the end of all mortal woes, while the bright lamp of heaven lighted up the earth as with the rays of hope, casting one unbroken line of rippling silver from horizon to horizon. It was one of those heavenly nights

> "When many bodies close
> Their eyes in balmy sleep and sweet repose,
> When winds no longer whisper thro' the woods
> Nor murmuring tides disturb the gentle floods."

All was still with that breathless stillness, which

> "Leaves room for the full soul
> To open all itself, without the power
> Of wholly calling back its own."

She gazed on the tranquil scene—listened to the whispering ocean, and repeated, half aloud, Wordsworth's glorious lines to the moon—

> "As the ample moon
> In the deep stillness of a summer even,
> Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,
> Burns like an unconsuming fire of light
> In the green trees: and kindling on all sides
> Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil
> Into a substance glorious as her own;
> Yea, with her own incorporated, by power

> Capacious and serene: like power abides
> In man's celestial spirit; virtue thus
> Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds
> A calm, a beautiful and silent fire,
> From the incumbrances of mortal life,
> From error, disappointment—nay, from guilt!"

"Guilt!" she repeated with a shudder. "Ah, never! never can my love come to *that*. Wrong, sinful, wretched, and hopeless, but O God! not guilt!"

And the queen of night looked down in sorrow and in pity.

All was still. She was thinking of *him*. Heaven help her! what else did she ever think of? wondering—as so many of us do when far away from those we love, and our hearts are full of tender fancies—whether he too were looking at that bright orb, and thinking of her as she was of him, though she was never to see him again! Never again, through all the weary years of life. Life without him?

A painful gasping sob broke from her, and hearing the door open she turned her face from it, to hide her emotion from the servant whom she supposed had entered.

A quick step, and ere she could look round Vandeleur was on his knees at her side, and had clasped her to his heart.

A cry of terror, of anguish, escaped her lips. So near the haven of refuge and to be overtaken by the storm at the eleventh hour, almost as she was casting anchor in the blessed harbour! Another struggle—another fight, when the poor frail bark was well-nigh spent! It was too much, and with a piteous cry she sank back in a dead faint.

Greatly terrified Vandeleur seized one of the flower vases, threw the blossoms on the ground, and plentifully bedewed her face with its contents, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing signs of returning life. But with that life came memory, rushing back in one full tide, giving her the courage of despair.

She rose to her feet, and steadying herself by the sofa—

"Mr. Vandeleur," she said, her lips were white, but the words never faltered as they fell like ice on his astonished ears, "this is ungenerous and unkind. I am ill, and suffering, and I desire to be left alone."

But Vandeleur was a man very much in love, and would not take a dismissal thus, and his pleadings softened the look in her eyes, but not her decision. She was firm.

"No, it must not be. We must part for ever. Yes, even as friends. It is a hard task.

Help me to fulfil it. You are a man, and should be the stronger to assist me—to assist us both. We have gone on too long under the specious name of friendship, but it is not too late to turn back into the right path."

She looked so lovely as she stood there in the moonlight, framed as it were in her golden hair, which shrouded her to the ground, so pure, so lovable, the embodiment of all that is beautiful in woman; and the leaven in the man's nature rose up and refused to let him listen. He could not live without her, and he said so.

He was not wanting in eloquence, and he now called up all his powers of rhetoric to aid his cause, and seeing her waver, as he thought, he drew a vivid picture of his own misery and wretchedness, without her—his cold, unhappy home—and of what life would be with her.

She was sorely tempted. To whom, after all, was the sacrifice? what was earthly honour in comparison with *his* happiness? Could she not give up all for his dear sake? Ay, easily. To be gathered to that dear breast—never again to leave him—no more tears and struggles; but peace, love, and joy henceforth to the end of life! The temptation was great; and as he knelt at her feet and gazed up at

her— waiting for her words on which hung —to him—life or death—her courage nearly failed her. It was only the sacrifice of herself, was that anything where *he* was concerned? Nothing—but for one consideration. *A hereafter!* To lose both souls for a few years of happiness! Never, never.

He was angry and maddened as he saw her momentary weakness departing, and heard her firm, decided farewell. He accused her of fickleness—want of love, of trust. She could not answer him for sobbing, for she was crying as if her heart would break; but she was firm in her resolve, and he angrily rose to his feet, and with bitter words left the room.

Yet even as she saw him go, she stretched out her arms as if to recall him at any price, but the door closed upon him, and the outstretched arms fell to her sides, and a wailing cry escaped her. Never to see him again! never to write to him—never to hear his dear voice any more! For the first time she realised her desolation, and as she sank down almost crushed to death, she felt that had it to be done again she would have no courage for another such trial.

Weak, and ill, and exhausted by a sleepless night, it was late on the following morning

when Eveline, dressed at last—carelessly, without any thought for her personal appearance—crept wearily into her sitting-room. She had done right, but at what a cost? Wearily her head sank down on her arms that were flung listlessly on the table before her, while she waited for the carriage that was to bear her away; for another flight was before her—this time out of England—somewhere—anywhere—where he could not hear of her. In her weak state, the mere physical strain for such an effort was appalling. The burning August sun shone with a tropical heat that made every movement an exertion; but she was lost to all outward sensations—she neither felt, saw, nor heard anything that went on around her. She had borne as much as nature could bear, and she was sunk in a half torpor of exhaustion.

Unheard the servants came in and out of her room, and unheard was Vandeleur's step as he softly approached her, and stood by her side, pained yet happy at seeing her misery. Was it not caused by love for him?

How long he had been standing there, she knew not, for she was unconscious of his presence, till kneeling down at her side he passed

a caressing arm round her, and drew the wretched woman to him.

"Eveline, will you not forgive me?"

"*You* here!" she exclaimed, freeing herself.

"How could I go till you had forgiven me?" said he. "Are you still angry with me? Eveline, I will promise all—everything you ask—only don't send me from you in anger. My people have all gone abroad for a few weeks, and I have been so counting on a few peaceful days with you. Will you send me away to utter misery? to banishment? to destruction? Eveline, have some pity. Be my friend still."

Let us draw a veil over a woman's weakness—a woman's love. The battle was unequal—the weak succumbed to the strong. If ever woman was rewarded by love and devotion, Eveline was for the next fortnight; but the end came, and Vandeleur was obliged to leave, and then she woke from her dream.

He spoke of their meeting in the course of a day or two at Gaveston, and this reminded her that Pamela's last letter, with some others, was still lying unopened in her desk.

To meet the world again?

She turned sick and faint at the mere

thought, and hiding her face in her hands, she whispered—

"I cannot go."

"Why not, dearest?" said he, not comprehending her bitter shame and horror of herself as conscience woke. "Why not?"

"Oh, Henry!" she faltered, raising her white, terror-stricken face—"and to meet your wife!"

He drew her hands gently down, and strove to pacify her by every argument of which he was master, but in vain: and it was not till he urged, "For *my* sake, darling, you must go," that she gained any control over herself and promised obedience to his wishes. But when he left her, she rushed to her room, and throwing herself on her knees, shed such tears as a woman weeps but once in her life.

CHAPTER XII.

"There's a mansion old, 'mid the hills of the west,
So old that men know not by whom it was built;
But its pinnacles gray, through the forest hoar,
Have glimmered a thousand years and more;
And many a tale of sorrow and guilt
Would blanch the cheek
If its stones could speak
The secrets locked in its silent breast."

ERNEST JONES.

"Feare from our hearts tooke
The very life. To be thunderstroke
With such a voice."

CHAPMAN.

LORD and Lady Pierrepoint remained in Scotland somewhat later than usual, in order to allow the young married couple undisputed possession of the Abbey, and thus enable them to entertain, *sans géne*, whom they pleased.

Accordingly, numerous were the invitations

that had gone forth—so numerous, that it seemed probable the Abbey, large as it was, would not contain the bidden guests, unless, indeed, some order were made in their coming; for since their marriage, the Gavestons had asked their friends in the most reckless way, both at home and abroad, to come to them any time during September and October, their temporary reign at Gaveston—"Where Pamela intends to queen it right royally," as her husband said of her.

The Abbey (of which my readers had a slight glimpse in the beginning of this book)—formerly a monastery of very large extent—was a fine old Gothic building; and though the alterations and additions which modern exigencies required might have driven an archæologist distracted, it was, to less educated eyes, a picturesque and stately pile—standing on an eminence, and surrounded by a magnificent forest.

The central hall was a spacious, lofty chamber. The domed ceiling, which rose to the full height of the house, was, as were also the walls, of massively carved oak, the antiquity of which was attested no less by the colour than by the quaint, grotesque masques which supported the corbels; fluted pillars, likewise

of the same black oak, adorned with Corinthian capitals, upheld the music-gallery and organ-loft, beneath which was the grand staircase, brought by one of the lords of Pierrepoint from Florence. The magnificence of the carving, and the symmetry of the design, betrayed its nationality. Italy alone can send forth such triumphs of art. From the gallery waved many a flag of modern warfare, while the walls were decorated by portraits of the Gavestons of centuries gone by, together with coats of mail, hauberk and vizor, and battle-axe and broadsword; but whether these trophies really belonged to the old Crusaders and Knights Templars, under whose grim portraits they hung, the reader must decide for himself. Certainly the housekeeper had no doubt whatever on the subject, and conscientiously informed the interested tourists who were permitted to see the place in the family's absence, of the true history of each piece of armour; how *this* had been worn by Sir Geoffroi de Gavestone, and received that dent in warding off a Saracen blow, aimed at Richard Cœur de Lion, who had knighted him on the spot; how *that* belonged to Sir Hugh, one of the Templars, whose vizor had been split in two by the battle-axe of a gentleman

whose sister Sir Hugh was carrying off, Sir Hugh being it would seem of an amatory nature, and so on through no end of legendary lore.

Many memorials of the prowess of more modern members of the family in less sanguinary fields, might be seen in the buffalo horns, elephant tusks, antlers of many sorts of deer, and stuffed skins of various wild animals, which decorated walls and floor, while the luxurious velvet couches, and the tables littered with writing materials, newspapers, novels, &c., showed that the hall was a favourite lounge, and it was also the general rendezvous before the dressing-bell rang, where men might, unreproved, come into ladies' presence booted and spurred from the hunting field, or muddied and gaitered from the turnips.

On either side of the staircase was a gallery, once the cloisters, but now shut off by doors; converted, the one into a set of bachelor rooms, the other into offices, with two or three rooms appropriated to the sons of the house. At the extreme end of this gallery was a door invariably kept locked, and on which hung a tolerable-sized looking-glass. This door masked a staircase, long in disuse,

and said to be haunted, and the existence of which was scarcely known except by the members of the family.

On the first landing, lighted by a triple lancet-window, were also two doors — one opening on a picture-gallery, the other on to other rooms.

The rest of the house is needless to describe; suffice it that it was the magnificent château of one of England's wealthiest peers; and my readers, if curious on the subject, can easily imagine the different suites of rooms belonging to such houses.

The Gavestons were at home, and high revels were being held.

Pamela had earnestly wished to have Eveline with her for a few quiet days before her company arrived; but Eveline, who but a few weeks before had been counting on her friend as a haven of refuge, now shrank in dread from meeting the quiet scrutiny she knew of old, and which she dared no longer meet. On one pretext or another she delayed her visit till she knew the house was too full of visitors for Lady Gaveston to have much time to bestow on her.

Her lover gone, and left to her own most wretched thoughts, she had become the prey to

those painful gnawings of conscience that all ill-doing brings to the once pure and true.

Her future appalled her. To live henceforth a lie to the world—to accept the esteem and regard of friends when conscience cried Avaunt!—to hear sin, such as that which now crushed her to the earth, spoken of and the sinners denounced, and yet bear herself bravely—to be false to the core—to dread the sight of friends—to live among them with the haunting terror of discovery for ever before her, poisoning her life and murdering sleep—such henceforth was to be the life of the once pure and virtuous Eveline Greville, who, till now, had been the soul of truth and honour.

Terror-stricken, she cried passionately to heaven for a forgiveness she despaired of. Well might she exclaim with Macbeth—

> "Renown and grace are dead;
> The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
> Is left this vault to brag of."

Vandeleur's letters teeming with love and gratitude alone could rouse her from her wretchedness. His tenderness soothed her; but it was as the soothing of a deadly opiate.

When she arrived at the Abbey, Lady Gaveston's quick eyes at once told her that

something was very wrong with her friend, but to all her affectionate inquiries Eveline gave the same answer. "She had been ill—London had been too much for her—she would soon be better." But Lady Gaveston, though forced to content herself with this reply, felt that illness alone could not account for those fits of absence: those sudden bursts of gaiety—too evidently forced: those nervous startings: those heavy eyelids which told of midnight weepings: nor for the sad, grateful tone and manner with which all her sympathy was accepted. All this was so different from the bright, cheerful Eveline she had last seen four or five months before, that she resolved to watch and see if it lay in her power to help the friend she loved so well.

"I suppose she has found her idol," mused Pamela, "and as for his—whoever he may be—not loving her, it is impossible: she is more bewitching than ever with that imploring look in her great eyes. Illness? ah! bah! illness don't do *that*. *Nous verrons.* A good-natured friend is a great help in these cases. Good gracious! can it be Mr. Challenor? Impossible! He has accepted for next week. *Can* it be possible?"

How far, how very far, was she from the

miserable truth! That Vandeleur—a man for whom she, Lady Gaveston, had a slight contempt, regarding him as a charming butterfly and about as ephemeral—that he should win Eveline Greville's love, even had he been free, was a possibility that never in her wildest dreams crossed her brain; for the reader will perhaps remember that Lady Gaveston had never seen them together, except during that first visit at Beaumanoir in the previous winter.

"What a delicious old place this is," said Eveline to Lord Gaveston, as they sat in the hall, late one afternoon, some days after her arrival.

"It *is* a nice old place," assented he; "the home of one's ancestors, though rather of yours than mine; for our branch started out of the main line a long time ago."

"Fortunate for the place you found your way back."

"Well, honestly, though you are the direct heir, I do not think it an advantageous thing for a woman to have such a place as this on her hands."

"Indeed not," replied Eveline, cordially endorsing the sentiment. "One would feel like a second Atlas."

"The place looks as if it boasted a ghost," said Jack Darrell; "just the sort, you know. Was it not a monastery once? I heard some one say so."

"The ghosts have not favoured our generation," said Gaveston; "but there *is* a tradition that nuns haunt the cloisters."

"Nuns?" said Mr. Digby; "one—a solitary one—is the right thing, wringing her hands or saying her chaplet."

"The housekeeper and her satellites are, I fancy, the only nuns who now haunt the cloisters," said Lady Gaveston; "for they have long been turned into the maids' offices."

"And bachelor's rooms," put in Gaveston, mischievously.

There was a laugh from the men, while his wife gave him a frown, meant to be severe, for his improper innuendo.

"I assure you there is nevertheless a story of a ghost here," said Charles Gaveston, a brother of the last speaker, and in holy orders.

"Is there, really?" cried a young lady, "do pray tell us. I so love a ghost story, and this gloomy hall is the very place for one. One could easily fancy it haunted."

"Let us have lamps and candles, then," said

Lady Gwen, "I have a horror of being frightened."

"Nothing very alarming, I dare say, Lady Gwen," said Vandeleur, who had been some days at the Abbey; "and when Charley has finished his story, I will tell you another—a real one—that happened to myself."

"There is plenty of light, fire away, Charley," said Lord Gaveston; "and if by any accident you raise a spirit, perhaps in your double capacity of priest and story-teller, you can lay it again."

"No man can lay his own ghost, *c'est connu*. Let us have Van's," said Lord Lorton, Pamela's eldest brother.

"How shocked Mrs. Vandeleur would be if she were here," said Pamela, who was sitting beside Eveline; "but luckily she does not come till to-morrow."

"Is she coming to-morrow?" said Eveline, with careless politeness.

"Come, Van, you're called on," said somebody.

"Oh! *please*, Mr. Gaveston," pleaded one or two young ladies, who greatly admired the handsome curate, "do let us have your story first."

"Very well then. It was in the year—"

"Never mind the year," said Lady Gaveston; "we don't care about dates."

"Except on the table," said Bob Markham, who never let a chance slip.

"I shall never get on if you interrupt like this. Well, once upon a time, as I am not to say when, this house was really an abbey."

"No one ever doubted that, old fellow."

"You be quiet, Lorton."

"Well, anyhow," continued the curate, "it was before the cloisters were turned into maid's offices——"

"And bachelors' rooms," parenthesised Gaveston.

"Exactly—that an abbess held sway over the nuns who really peopled the cloisters then."

"Instead of kitchen-maids," said Gaveston.

"Instead of kitchen-maids," repeated his brother, seriously. "Well, so old is the Abbey, that even in the days I am telling you of, the cloisters were already haunted. There was a certain niche held in terrorum over recusant nuns, which niche had already been put to a cruel use; but as ghosts laugh at brick and mortar, the unhappy fair one was said to glide out at midnight, and to be seen walking up and down the cloisters, wringing

her hands, or else carrying a lantern. So terrifying was this, that it would have been a brave nun who durst walk there after vespers.

"The abbess seems to have been a stern abbess; for, with a refinement of cruelty peculiar to ladies, she used, as a penance, to order her disobedient sisters to pace the cloisters so many times between 11.50 p.m. and 12.50 a.m.

"The penance, however, was generally commuted; for after one of these ordeals a sister had been found stretched on the pavement one morning—dead.

"There was a certain Sister Louise—I am always sorry for Louise; for I am sure she was made a nun against her will. Well, Sister Louise had by her own confession committed some terrible peccadillo, and by her own wish accepted the fearful punishment of the cloisters. She began her awful midnight walks, gaining thereby a great reputation. Now it appears there was another nun, but whether equally moved by remorse, or curiosity——"

"Women *are* curious," said a voice, as if asserting a fact in natural history.

"The legend does not inform us on that point," coolly said the narrator; "but one

night this remorseful, or curious nun arose from her pallet, and bethought her of following Sister Louise.

"It was a fearful night—the thunder rolled in awful peals—the vivid lightning played about the cloisters in lurid, satanic flashes; but undeterred by such terrors, the nun went on, determined to find Sister Louise."

"This is horrible, Mr. Gaveston; what next?"

"At the furthermost end she beheld the object of her search,

> "'Black was her garb, her rigid rule,
> Reformed on Benedictine school,'

and in her hand she carried a light, which was suddenly extinguished by a flash from heaven, and immediately followed by a crackling peal of thunder—doubtless overhead, though the nun afterwards declared it came from underground, and further averred that the earth opened and a figure appeared."

"What sort of a figure? Sulphur and blue flames?" irreverently asked Markham.

Unheeding the interruption, Charles continued:

"The nun ran back to inform the abbess, who, with the whole of the sisterhood, at

once repaired to the spot. There was Sister Louise ; but, alas ! not alone ! and her nightly visitant was in brave attire, slashed doublet, and silken hose. Before he could be seized—a feat of which the abbess was quite capable, —and woe betide the sacrilegious intruder who should fall into her fair hands ! he had disappeared, none knew how ; apparently, the earth had swallowed him up. The next day there was an awful ceremony. The niche was opened, and poor Sister Louise bricked up ; though it is recorded that to the last there was a mocking smile on her lips, as if defying her tormentors."

"That is no ghost story," said Vandeleur, "simply a legend that belongs to every convent."

"Wait a bit. I have not come to the ghost yet. After a certain number of days had elapsed, the niche was re-opened in presence of the whole community, as a fearful warning to nuns who harkened unto midnight visitants ; but lo ! not a vestige of Sister Louise was to be seen ; and since then her spirit has haunted the cloisters."

There was a momentary silence, and then he resumed :

"Strange to say, last night, after you

fellows had left me in the smoking-room, I fell asleep."

"A most marvellous circumstance, truly," said Vandeleur, ironically: "and I suppose you dreamt Sister Louise paid you a visit."

"I did not dream it. *I saw her*, as plainly as I see you," and he spoke gravely.

This announcement was received with a shout of laughter, and a declaration from several of the men that they should sit up and try their luck.

"Laugh away," said Charles Gaveston, "but I assure you it is a fact. I did not wake up till past three, and naturally went to my room, which is, as you know, or rather do not know, in one of the cloisters, and at the further end I saw—the Ghost!"

There was a general exclamation, but Pamela said,

"How can you talk such nonsense, Charley? You were dreaming."

"Not a bit of it. I was half way down the cloister. I saw at the further end, close by the door of the haunted staircase, which is never unlocked—close by Gaveston's old room—you have been put there, Vandeleur, this time—well, there I distinctly saw a figure in a long, dark dress, holding a taper in its hand."

"Well, what else did you see?" asked Vandeleur.

"I saw no more, for the light was suddenly extinguished. I walked to the end of the corridor, but could find no trace of the ghost."

"Did you look up the staircase?" asked Vandeleur.

"I tried the door, but it was locked. It always is locked. I don't suppose the door has been opened within the memory of any Gaveston living."

"You probably saw the reflection of yourself and your candle in the mirror, which hangs on the door," observed Vandeleur carelessly.

"I don't believe it was the reflection of myself, for I saw the long gown, and I certainly had not mine on."

"I dare say it was one of the laundrymaids, or the housekeeper, sitting up late over her jams," said Pamela; "her rooms are in that corridor."

A deep groan here resounded through the hall, and almost at the same moment the solemn tones of a "Miserere" pealed forth from the organ."

"Good heavens! What is it?" cried the

ladies, greatly terrified, and afraid to look round the gloomy apartment.

"A trick from some one," said Digby.

"Whoop again!" cried Lord Gaveston, starting up from the chair in which, lazily reclining, he had listened to his brother's story.

"Forbear!" cried a sepulchral voice from a corner of the hall.

There was a rush to the spot where a suit of armour stood, and amidst much laughing and cries of "Unearth him!" "Dig him out!" "Here he is!" little Bob Markham came from his hiding-place.

"What a jolly fright I gave you!" he exclaimed; "I believe you thought the nun was coming amongst you. Mrs. Falconer did the organ splendidly."

"Such jokes are unwarrantable," said Vandeleur, very angrily; "you have frightened Mrs. Greville into a fainting fit."

True enough. In the gloom of the room, no one had observed that Eveline, who had been leaning back among the cushions of a sofa, was in a dead faint. There was a great commotion. In that room there were no appliances for such disasters, and Eveline did not revive.

"Run for the housekeeper, Charley," said his brother, looking much alarmed.

In another moment Mrs. Comfit appeared, a stout motherly person in black silk, armed with cold water and hartshorn, of which she made liberal use. After a time, Eveline came to her senses.

"Mr. Gaveston has been frightening us all with his ghost stories," said Lady Gaveston, still bathing Eveline's forehead; "by the way, Mrs. Comfit, were you or any of the maids up late last night?"

"Yes, my lady, I was; do you feel better now, ma'am? and I saw Mr. Charles in the cloister. I did not at first know it was Mr. Charles, so I went back to the still-room, but when I heard his door shut I knew who it was."

"So it was *you*, Mrs. Comfit, that my brother took for Sister Louise's ghost," said Gaveston, laughing.

"Will you be good enough to send Mrs. Greville's maid to her room, and see that she has some sal volatile?" said Lady Gaveston, seeing the gentlemen were about to chaff the housekeeper.

There was a general laugh at Charles's expense, which he took very good-humouredly.

"I tell you what, Markham, we will have no more practical jokes, if you please," said Lord Gaveston, with a severity he rarely exhibited.

Bob was so full of contrition, and so unhappy, that Eveline begged she might be scolded instead of him.

The dressing-bell soon after dispersed the party.

Pamela accompanied Eveline to her room.

"Are you in the habit of fainting?" she asked, "I never knew you do so before."

"I have not been well lately," said Eveline, evasively.

"You are not looking well, I must say. I hope you take care of your mistress, Mrs. Jones, she needs it. Don't people drink rum and milk in the morning?"

"Yes, my lady, and a very fine thing it is for weakly people," responded the abigail, whom my readers may remember had been allowed her long-promised holiday that last fortnight at Bournemouth, and who was thus ignorant of Vandeleur's visit there.

"Then why don't you give it her? She shall have a cow all to herself if she likes," said Pamela caressingly to Eveline.

"I do not think a whole cow would be

requisite, my lady," said Mrs. Jones, solemnly; "but Mrs. Greville won't take any."

"That's nonsense; if it is good for her, she must; mind you see to it, Mrs. Jones," and Lady Gaveston went to her toilette.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Faut il apprendu à feindre? Quelle science, hélas!"
VOLTAIRE.

WHEN Eveline, dressed for dinner, went down, she found Vandeleur the sole occupant of the hall.

He went up at once to meet her.

"How pale and cold you look," he said, "come and sit by the fire. Are you better now? I was so wretched when you fainted. Foolish child!"

"I could not help it," she replied, in low, trembling accents, and bending forward over the fire. "I thought I should have died when Mr. Gaveston was speaking. What did he say more?"

"Nothing. He saw the housekeeper, and took her for a ghost. Look bright again, dearest. Here are people coming down stairs.

For *my* sake, Eveline, look yourself," urged Vandeleur, using a formula which he knew could not fail with her.

He was so happy himself, so bewitched by the intense affection he had evoked, that he was blind to the misery that was eating, like the worm that dieth not, into the wretched woman's heart; for, like the loving woman she was, she strove to hide such feelings from her lover, deeming, poor fond fool, that his stings of conscience were equally hard for him to bear; and to alleviate a pain which existed but in her own imagination, smiles, love, and caresses were for him, while tears and anguish were kept for the solitude of her own breast.

If woman were less lovingly unselfish, less tenderly deceitful, maybe men would be more generous. But when did reason ever enter into the calculations of love? When did a loving woman ever stop to consider herself?

And so Vandeleur, ignorant of all the aching pain which filled the gentle heart he knew beat for him alone, attributed half of Eveline's agitation to an unacknowledged jealousy of his wife, who was to arrive the following day.

It was not jealousy, but an agony of shame and remorse, with which she awaited Mrs.

Vandeleur's advent. She would fain have fled from the ordeal, but soothed and persuaded by Vandeleur, she remained, with what feelings she alone knew.

Avoiding an earlier meeting, Mrs. Greville retired to her room before the dreaded guest arrived, and did not come down again till the gong announced that dinner was on the table, thus deferring to the latest possible moment coming face to face with the woman she had so terribly wronged, and at whose feet she might sue in vain for mercy.

Desperation with a woman will sometimes give her the calmness of innocence, and Vandeleur, who had cast many an anxious glance up the staircase, was surprised, but greatly re-assured, as Eveline, calm, self-possessed, and more lovely than usual, seemed to float into the room, speaking a few words here and there, as she made her way to Mrs. Vandeleur.

Bearing herself with perfect gentleness and courtesy, but inwardly humiliated and despising herself for her hypocrisy, she offered her hand, which the other coldly took, and after making a few civil inquiries, Eveline turned to some men near her, speaking with an animation she had not shown for a long time. She

looked so passing fair, her beautiful eyes lighted up by a feverish flush, shaming the very diamonds on her slender throat by their brilliancy, her coral lips parted with a smile, the beauty of which I never saw on any other mouth, that no man, knowing all the circumstances, could have condemned her.

And Vandeleur looked on this exquisite vision, and his heart swelled to think that this lovely creature was all his own, but he wist not of the throbbing pain at her heart, nor of the dose of laudanum she had swallowed ere leaving her dressing-room.

Envious of the universal homage offered to this beautiful woman, Mrs. Vandeleur determined to show her disapprobation of "flirting widows;" but the other gave her no chance, for, without any apparent effort, Eveline kept out of her way; easy enough in the large, numerous suite of rooms then thrown open, and when Pamela saw her so bright and gay, singing merry songs, chattering and laughing with every one, she was considerably reassured, both as to the bodily and mental health of one she loved so well. So easily are even our friends deceived by outward show.

Going up to Eveline, who was seated at the

piano, and laying her hand on her shoulder, she said, half chaffing, for Lady Gaveston was not given to be sentimental,

"Rum and milk is evidently a panacea. Do you know I began to think you were in love!"

Eveline's fingers ran over the keys, and glancing archly at her friend, she sang

"'"Tell me, what's love?" saith youth, one day
To drooping age who cros't his way.—
"It is a sunny hour of play,
For which Repentance dear doth pay:
Repentance! Repentance!
And this is love, as wise men say."'"

"Ah! but you don't sing the last verse," said Mrs. Falconer, a bright, laughing brunette, as, taking up the strain, she sang with much expression—

"'Just then, young Love himself came by,
And cast on Youth a smiling eye:
Who could resist that glance's ray?
In vain did age his warning say,
"Repentance! Repentance!"
Youth, laughing, went with Love away!'"

A good deal of merriment followed this. Mr. Digby, perhaps, was the only one who noticed that the brilliant flush on Mrs. Greville's cheek had died away; and taking a glass of wine from the tray that had been brought in,

he brought it to her, with a remark on the necessity of a little stimulant, especially for ladies who were in the habit of fainting.

She took the glass, and drank a portion of the wine, and rallying all her strength, she sang, with charming archness, as she stood there, glass in hand, the first opening bars of *il segreto per ser felice.*

Her auditors were delighted, of course—all but Mrs. Vandeleur, who said, coldly, she did not approve of such theatrical display—" as if any one cared a d—— for her approval," said Bob Markham, who overheard her.

Vandeleur, from prudential reasons, kept aloof from Eveline the whole evening, but he chafed at the restraint with no little impatience, for he longed to join the merry party she was enchanting, and to look on the lovely, laughing face he knew so well.

A few minutes later that joyous face was hidden in her pillow, and its owner was sobbing as if her heart would break, her hands ruthlessly tearing her hair, as if by bodily pain to deaden that at her heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

"She wants a heart,
She speaks, behaves, acts just as she ought
But never, never reached one generous thought
So very reasonable, so unmov'd,
As never yet to love or to be lov'd."

POPE.

THE following morning a drizzling rain kept the ladies within doors, and repairing to the library without any of the male element, they endeavoured to kill time as best they could.

Very pale and depressed, but beautiful still, Eveline sat as far from Mrs. Vandeleur as she could, but not beyond reach of the hard metallic voice which carried to every corner of the room. She had a terrible tongue, had Mrs. Vandeleur, and as sinners were being ruthlessly condemned and impaled, Eveline shuddered to think what *her* fate and that of the man for whom she would have willingly

died, would be, if ever Mrs. Vandeleur should suspect the love that existed between them.

"Is it possible a woman can be so merciless?" thought Eveline, as some stern denunciation reached her ears, "if she only knew the misery I endure, even *she* might have some pity —I am not to be envied."

Indeed she was not—not all her intense love for her destroyer could annihilate remorse, but—she loved him.

"I do not agree," Mrs. Vandeleur was saying, "there is no middle path between right and wrong, and the cant about temptation being great, is simply opening the door to vice."

"Yet people naturally good," said Lady Wrexham, "are sometimes led away, and one cannot but feel sorry for them."

"People have no business to be led away," replied Mrs. Vandeleur; "right-minded people are never led away. I cannot understand any excuse being made for vice. If we only put it down with the strong moral hand of censure, there would be less wickedness in the world."

"Unluckily, that 'strong moral hand,'" said Mrs. Falconer, who had taken a great dislike to Mrs. Vandeleur, and had been relieving herself for the last hour by irritating

her, and shaking a red flag, so to say, in her face, "is apt to fall on ourselves instead of on the delinquent, and we generally get punished for the sake of saying a few vicious words."

"It is not for the sake of saying a few vicious words," retorted Mrs. Vandeleur, loftily, "but to show disapprobation of criminals."

"But how if one loved the criminal?" continued Mrs. Falconer, "for you know, one *is* capable of that monstrosity."

"Crime is too serious a matter to be turned into a jest," answered Mrs. Vandeleur, icily.

"A great deal too serious," replied Mrs. Falconer, "a great deal. I was only asking for information, for if anybody I loved did anything very naughty, I should be puzzled how to use the 'moral hand.' Should it fall on the naughty one or the naughtiness? Is that 'moral hand' a whip? And do you whip your children? I have no children, but if I had, I don't think I could whip a little, soft thing, that loved me, even if it were *very* naughty."

"We were not talking of children," replied Mrs. Vandeleur, "though we have authority for using the rod."

"I have heard that we read that injunction

in a wrong sense," said Mrs. Falconer, her eyes dancing with fun; "we are enjoined to spoil a child, but to spare the rod."

"We are told that Satan can quote Scripture to suit his views," angrily retorted Mrs. Vandeleur.

There was a moment's consternation, but Mrs. Falconer was too good humoured to be angry at any retaliation which her teazing evoked.

"My brother does tell me, sometimes," she said, with provoking simplicity, "that I am a wicked little—— I cannot say such a naughty word. I am afraid you are of his opinion; and, I assure you, all this time I have been wanting to make you my Gamaliel, and to learn wisdom from those (pinched)" —this aside—"lips. Do tell me about this 'moral hand.' It's rather a nice, and certainly a new, word. How do you use it? I have heard of a strict hand, and a cruel hand, but I never heard of a moral hand. Is it something tangible?"

"I see no wit in turning right feeling into ridicule," severely said Mrs. Vandeleur.

"Do you know that Lucy Belmont has taken back her husband?" said one of the ladies, addressing her hostess.

"I always said she would," said Lady Wrexham; "she perfectly adored him."

"And the return she got was his desertion," remarked Mrs. Vandeleur. "She never had any proper self-respect, or she would not have forgiven him. I cannot understand any woman so lost to all sense of her own dignity as to act as Mrs. Belmont has."

"Anyhow, she has reaped the reward of her touching forgiveness," said Lady Gaveston. "Her sister writes me that his gratitude and devotion to his wife pass words. Poor Lucy! I am glad for her own sake that she has acted thus."

"How much happier she would, or ought to be," observed Mrs. Falconer, "if, instead of going happily with him to their moor, she went to her father's, and sat there gnawing her heart out, and watching him go to the bad. That would be the 'moral hand,' I fancy; it might show more dignity, but it would certainly show more misery."

"It is well for some of us that we do not live in a palace of truth," said Lady Gwen. "'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.'"

Mrs. Vandeleur was scandalised at such moral turpitude.

"Well," recklesssly said Mrs. Falconer, whose rather elderly husband worshipped his bright, laughing wife, "I would rather be blind and happy, than enact the part of suffering virtue—as enacted by *her*," she added, in an undertone to Lady Wrexham. Then aloud—and a smile played over her pretty face as she thought how little cause her absent lord would ever give her for uneasiness—"I would forgive my husband a good deal if he came back penitent, dear old fellow!"

"It is really shocking to hear such immoral and unprincipled sentiments, uttered too by one of my own sex," retorted Mrs. Vandeleur, fiercely. And glancing towards Eveline, who sat shivering as she listened in silence: "Nothing would induce me to forgive such an insult, and I should at once seek a pure woman's only redress—divorce."

"A wife in such a case is likely to punish herself the most," said Lady Gaveston, dryly; "she loses her position, is called a *divorcée*, and no one stops to ask *who* was the offender; and of course she goes to the wall."

"I think, too, we should take a higher view, though Lady Gaveston's remark is perfectly true. We take a husband for better for worse; and if we only remembered how

much *we* have to be forgiven, we might try to win back one who has gone astray."

The speaker, not a young woman, had a very sweet, gentle voice.

"I do not coincide in your opinion at all, Lady Mary," replied Mrs. Vandeleur; "such leniency is a premium on vice."

"Hardly. Have we not the example of the Highest and Purest for the pardon of *all* sin?" said Lady Mary Bertram, in her strangely sweet voice. "It might be very difficult in one's own case, but one should strive to forgive—not to show indifference—and there is a vast distinction between the two. I even go a step further, and say we should endeavour to reclaim the woman who was sinning so grievously against herself."

"You would condescend to *speak* to such a woman?" asked Mrs. Vandeleur, horrified.

"Whose husband has been behaving so atrociously that this conversation has arisen?" said Lady Gwen. "You began it, Mrs. Vandeleur—has *your* husband been flirting?"

"Small blame to him if he has," whispered Mrs. Falconer.

"If I were *he*, I would divorce *her*," said another lady to Lady Gwen. "What an awful temper!"

"She is only good, my dear," responded Gwen.

"Ah, I never believed in your saints," said the other; "here's a specimen."

"I think Lady Mary is a saint," said Eveline, speaking for the first time.

"Lady Mary is an angel," said Mrs. Falconer, sitting down by Eveline's side; "there are few like her, more's the pity." Then louder, for Mrs. Vandeleur's edification, she continued: "As long as men are men, and women are pretty, the former will flirt with the latter; but I take it that it is often a good deal the wife's fault when such flirtations become serious. If a man gets bullied at home, he will seek compensation elsewhere. Small blame to him."

"If pretty women were less vicious, such things would not happen," said Mrs. Vandeleur.

"What, as husbands getting bullied?" asked Mrs. Falconer, bent on teazing. "If wives wouldn't bully, husbands wouldn't flirt."

"I do not know what you mean about 'bullying,'" said Mrs. Vandeleur, loftily; "but pretty women are all vicious."

Impossible to describe the sneering con-

tempt with which she uttered these last words.

Mrs. Falconer raised her eyebrows and made a comical face. Eveline coloured painfully, and Lady Gwen stared in undisguised astonishment.

Lady Gaveston came to the rescue, and carried off Mrs. Vandeleur.

"Mrs. Falconer, have you been flirting with Mr. Vandeleur?" asked Lady Gwen, looking much amused; "you and his wife have been hitting each other pretty hard."

"She hasn't hurt *me*," replied the other, laughing. "I am guiltless up to now; but I *will* flirt with him this evening—it will be such fun."

"Poor man! think of the curtain lectures he will get," said Mrs. Canning.

"And think of one's self!" cried Lady Wrexham. "Conceive falling under the lash of that tongue!"

"As bad as that 'moral hand,'" laughed Mrs. Falconer. "How fierce she grew! I thought she would have killed me."

"And yet I have heard people, who know her, say that she is an excellent woman," said Mrs. Greville.

"If excellence consists in denunciating

others, she certainly excels in that," said Mrs. Canning ; "but such excellence is not hard of attainment."

"Mind you all stand by me if that 'moral hand' comes down very heavily on me," said Mrs. Falconer, laughing, "for I intend to flirt with Mr. Vandeleur to the best of my ability."

"Is it ever worth while to give pain to others for one's own amusement?" said Lady Mary, bending over Mrs. Falconer's work, so that her slight reproach should not be overheard.

"That is spoken like yourself, Lady Mary," returned Mrs. Falconer, quite ready to hear the reproof aloud. "I don't deny that it would amuse me, for it would ; but I should like to punish her a little bit for her impertinence. 'Pretty women vicious,' indeed !"

"Make some allowance for the mortification of seeing her own face in the looking-glass," laughed Lady Gwen ; "the trial must be great. What think you, Eveline ? You have hardly spoken. I saw Mrs. Vandeleur bestow a benign look on you, but you looked too terrified to return it. But that woman has taken up our time too long, already ; will you draw me some Louis Quinze costumes for

my theatricals? What shall my dress be? Something *very* becoming."

"Light-blue Pompadour satin and maroon," said Eveline, rapidly sketching Lady Gwen as she stood before the glass arranging a coquettish little cap on her flaxen curls. "Don't move for a moment—that attitude is perfect."

"How pretty! how like!" exclaimed Mrs. Falconer, leaning over Eveline, whose rapid pencil had in a few strokes caught the attitude that had struck her artistic eye.

"Won't blue and maroon be rather *criant?*" asked Gwen, sitting down by Mrs. Greville, and watching her progress as she coloured her sketch.

"Not at all, if properly managed," replied Eveline, glancing at the flaxen head. "Your hair will bear a rich, full colour—one enhances the other."

"You never wear that colour yourself," said Gwen.

"No. I have too much red in my hair."

"That's a frank confession," laughed Mrs. Falconer. Red hair was not then considered desirable.

"How do you like that?" asked Eveline, handing her drawing to Gwen.

"Lovely, quite lovely!" cried Gwen. "You ought to set up as a costumier."

And as Mrs. Vandeleur did not make her appearance again, the morning passed very pleasantly.

CHAPTER XV.

"*King H.*—What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?
Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked, tho' locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."
HEN. VI.

"Company, tho' it reprieve a man from his melancholy, cannot secure him from his conscience."—SOUTH.

"OH, coward conscience, how thou dost afflict me! Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh," cries King Richard, as he wakes from his terrible dream.

Can any terrors equal those of a conscience ill at ease? Eveline Greville would have told you, shuddering, "None."

Since that morning's conversation her haunting fear became almost unendurable. She read discovery and condemnation in every face; the commonest occurrences were, to her,

big with importance; the sight of two people talking in a low, earnest voice in the same room with herself terrified her; and if Mrs. Vandeleur, who was short-sighted, happened to turn her eyes on her, her heart bounded at her side till she was almost sick with the pulsation. Life was an agony to her, and yet with all this misery she had to keep up a brave appearance, and make no show. It was almost more than she could bear.

One afternoon Pamela came into the room where she was, looking, as Eveline thought, very grave; and when she came up to her, speaking to no one else as she crossed the room—so different from Pamela, who seemed to radiate happiness—Eveline gave herself up for lost. The throbbing of her heart shook her from head to foot, and the ghastly smile which she forced to her white lips, so alarmed Lady Gaveston that she carried her off to her boudoir, where she made her lie down on the sofa.

Tears—unwonted visitors in Pamela's eyes—stood there as she gazed sadly at the change which a few months had made in her friend's appearance.

"Dear Eveline," said she, drawing a chair near to the sofa, and smoothing the hair back

from her friend's brow, damp from terror, "will you not tell me what ails you? Something is the matter. Are you ill, my dear one?—or tell me, Eveline, are you unhappy?"

The tender voice, the kindly caress, were more than she could bear; and turning to her friend with an agonised, piteous look, she burst into a passionate fit of weeping; convulsive sobs shook her frame as she endeavoured to regain her self-control, and it ended in wild, hysterical laughter, as she assured Pamela she was "so weak that kindness made her cry."

Very far from guessing the truth, Lady Gaveston, whose perfect health precluded all such moral weakness, was more inclined to give implicit credence to an assertion she had heard before of the consequences of illness, than would have done another of less faultless organisation; and she strove, half laughingly, but very tenderly, to soothe the invalid.

Hearing her husband's step, she went out to speak to him.

"I am very uneasy about her; I do think she ought to have a doctor. I never saw any one so changed."

Lord Gaveston looked serious. He gave little or no thought to any woman save his

wife; but now that she spoke of the change in Mrs. Greville, it did occur to him that she was thinner and more frail-looking than when he first met her at Beaumanoir. His wife's concern, however, touched him a good deal more.

"I suppose I may go in." And he suited the action to the word.

Seeing them enter together so seriously, Eveline clasped her hands, and, with white, set face, prepared to hear her sentence; but his kind, cheery manner reassured her, and relaxed the tension of her nerves with a relief that was almost painful. He was too honest and true, and Pamela was not only too high-minded, but too trustful of her friend, for either to have the faintest suspicion of the truth. The only fear that sometimes crossed her—and this she put from her almost angrily—was that Eveline might be struggling with a passion for Mr. Challenor. That she was ill, and very ill, there was no doubt; and to that she turned her attention.

Lord Gaveston sent for some wine, and insisted on the invalid drinking it. Restored more by their evident ignorance of her guilt than by the stimulant, she eagerly assented to his proposal that she should accompany him

and Pamela to see the gamekeeper's child, who had had a fall and broken its leg.

"That's what I came to you about," said Lady Gaveston, "only you looked so ill that I forgot it; and you are far too weak for such a walk. You had better stay here quietly till dinner."

Quietly! with a hell in her bosom! Anything to escape, if only for an hour, from her own thoughts. Living under the same roof with her lover, but completely separated from him, and hearing none of the tender assurances with which he had hitherto calmed her and given her courage, her conscience, left to itself, inflicted on her "such tortures that the hangman, tho' witty in his malice, could not equal."

Gladly she agreed to go with them, assuring them that the fresh air would do her the most good; but she had overrated her strength, and ere they had walked a mile, she was obliged to confess that she could go no farther, and would slowly return home while they went on to the gamekeeper's.

"Or possibly you may find me still here—it is quite warm enough to sit still. If only I had my sketch-book!" said she, as they seemed unwilling to leave her alone.

Once that Lord Gaveston's fears had been aroused about her, he showed all the tenderness which a man always feels for a suffering woman, and would readily have gone back for a pony-carriage, or walked home with her; for he was truly concerned to see that, exhausted by that short walk, she had sank down on the mossy root of a tree, very faint and tired.

While they were thus discussing, Mr. Vandeleur came by, and throwing away his cigar, joined them.

"Just in the nick of time, Van," said Gaveston; "we have tired out Mrs. Greville, and she will not allow us to go back with her, but you can do so. Will you trust yourself to him? He is such an old stager, I think you may. I have reverenced old Van, ever since I can remember anything."

"Come, come! don't impugn my youth before ladies," laughed Vandeleur, who at seven-and-thirty could still afford to laugh at his years; "or in justice to myself I must make love to Mrs. Greville, and who knows what the result might be?"

"Don't flatter yourself," said Lord Gaveston, ironically. "Look you, you are shocking Mrs. Greville already; she is blushing for

one who never blushed for himself. I shall have to take her home myself, I see that. Old age has not improved him, Mrs. Greville, you observe. Are you afraid to trust yourself to him ?"

Vandeleur, to cover her embarrassment, took the words out of her mouth, and after some good-humoured banter, and many injunctions from Pamela, the young husband and wife left them.

"At last!" said Vandeleur, pressing the little, trembling hand that lay on his arm. "At last! It seems ages since we met, yet only three days ago! Eveline, how are we ever to live like this ?"

"How, indeed ?" she said. "The last few days I have been living in such mortal agony, thinking I see detection on every face. My darling," she continued, in impassioned tones, and not heeding his assurance that there was not the slightest cause for fear, "my darling, do not suppose that I love you less, but oh! save me from this. My terror is almost more than I can bear."

Vandeleur was not exactly prepared for this passionate appeal, but he kissed away her tears, calmed her terrors, spoke of himself, and entreated her to keep more self-control.

"For," said he, "if my wife were to suspect anything, I should be undone."

Himself, not her! But in her unselfish love she did not mark that. The assurance that her love was to him the most precious boon on earth comforted her; and she at last lifted to his, a face that was no longer bedewed with tears.

"You look better than you did this morning," said Pamela to her, in the course of the evening; "but you are still very pale."

"Am I?" said Eveline, the hot blood dyeing face, neck, and bosom, as her eyes sank beneath Lady Gaveston's searching glance—a glance which formerly she would provoke from mere playfulness, but which she dared no longer meet.

Lady Gaveston, who was seeking for physical causes, laughed, saying gaily—

"She might well blush for losing the lovely complexion that she used to envy."

"Do these crowds bore you?" said Lord Lorton, taking the seat his sister had vacated. "They do me."

"We are at odds then," said Eveline, starting, but quickly recovering herself, "I like society, only I am not very strong, and this damp day has been trying."

"Ah! the unfortunate weather! how much it has to answer for," replied Lord Lorton, dryly.

Eveline laughed.

"Confess you fibbed. You are bored, and are too polite to say so to the brother of your hostess, though you might be more candid to your cousin. Do you know," he continued, bending on her the same penetrating gaze that Pamela had—reading into the very soul without a trace of impertinence—"you are a very different person to the one Pamela led me to expect. She used to write me that you were the most cheerful, equable temperament she ever knew; but I see you are not above the weaknesses of your sex. In the last twenty-four hours you have varied from the highest spirits to the depths of despondency."

"Suppose we discuss something more interesting than myself," said Eveline, writhing under this unconscious cross-examination.

"More interesting would be impossible—different, if you please. Let us discuss the philosophy of love."

"Does it admit of any?"

"I did not say so. I referred to the wisdom of loving. Love brings more pain than pleasure, if we may believe what poets have sung

from time immemorial. If so bitter a thing, better be without it."

"What! shut the sun out for ever, because of a rainy day? ah! no. No deep feeling can exist without pain, even from its very intensity. Yet of all earthly joys a pure and holy love is surely the greatest—the least tainted with sorrow;" her eyes half-filled, and her lips quivered as the thought went aching through her heart, that such love could never be hers.

"You ladies are so *exigéantes*—" began Lord Lorton.

"Do you think so? I should not have thought it," said Eveline, gently; "a woman who really loves is so humble—like the sensitive plant—

> 'Which could give small fruit
> Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
> Received more than all, it loved more than ever
> Where none wanted but it!'"

"You read Shelley, I see; a fascinating but unwholesome poet," remarked her companion.

"He felt keenly and wrote earnestly. If we regard this world as a garden and ourselves the butterflies, thought and meditation would be fatal to such ephemeral lives, but as

sentient beings, struggling to light through a tangled forest, we need all our intellect."

"Not to the exclusion of our compass," said Lord Lorton; "striving to reach the unattainable leads us to hopeless labyrinths, rhapsodies and morbidity—in all of which your poet excelled. Give me Shakespeare, who deals with facts, not phantoms."

"Is it fair to compare the two?" said Eveline; "Shakespeare is the poet of observation—of the feelings of *others:* Shelley the poet of *his own* emotions. You might as well compare Dante and Petrarch. No doubt in his striving after ideal realism, Shelley was often morbid; but how grand! how true to his own instincts! and if his aspirations be erroneous, they are always generous!"

"In his love of freedom, *par exemple.* What a dangerous Chartist he would have been now-a-days!"

"Ah! you must not talk against freedom to an Italian," cried Eveline, her eyes sparkling.

"I took you for a right-minded English Conservative," laughed Lord Lorton.

"So I am, except when I think of my country, and then *I* too could cry to freedom—

> 'Awake! arise! until the mighty sound
> Of your career shall scatter in its gust
> The thrones of the oppressor.'

My poor fettered Italy! But some day she will break the chains that now bind down in her all that is great and noble."

"How you would glory in a revolution!" said Lorton, amused at her enthusiasm.

"No, indeed; I have no faith in them," responded she, "and less liking; nor do I believe in the wisdom of sudden liberty after long oppression. It would be like setting a caged lion free. He would, in his intoxication, rage rampant over the country, devouring friend and foe alike. *I* hope for systematic change and a wise rule. We need but look to the revolution of '94, to dread such horrors befalling any nation. Long and cruel oppression will lead to them, but that does not prove them desirable."

"How you insist on your Italian origin," said her companion, waiving politics; "you are to the full as much English—and my kinswoman."

"My Anglicism is patent," replied she, laughingly touching the golden curls that caressed her white throat, "but my heart is Italian. The only relation I ever knew in early days—my mother"—her voice uttered the word with unspeakable tenderness—"was Italian, and so," she added, with that fasci-

nating mobility of countenance which is so winning, and looking archly at him, "and so *I* am Italian."

"But not such a shocking revolutionist as I began to fear," he rejoined, laughing. "See where the philosophy of love has led us!"

"To the love of country and of freedom!" cried she; "at least there is wisdom there."

"More than in human love?" asked he.

"I thought you scoffed at love," she retorted.

"I?" cried he, warmly, "what, scoff at so priceless a boon? never! not at the reality; but there is so much spurious stuff afloat—good imitation too—that I think the real thing died out in Arcadia."

"Yet, if the annals of Mayfair were truly written, you would, methinks, find that Arcadia still lingered among us," replied Eveline, rising as she caught a reproachful look from Vandeleur, who hated to see her engrossed by any one but himself, and who, as he exchanged a few words with her, slipped a folded paper into her hand.

Unused to such manœuvres, she was about to look at it, when a warning glance from Vandeleur brought the blood to her face, and she put the note in her pocket.

Who that has loved—worthily or unworthily—can doubt but what that letter was pressed to her lips, to her heart, read again and again, and finally pillowed beneath her cheek as she slept.

Alas! that such love should be given where love is a crime! But it was too late to speak now. He had become her worship, her religion, her idol; and though "one rose from the dead" she would not have been warned, and would rather have believed that heaven and earth could come together, than that he could desert her.

Which of us learns wisdom from the sufferings of others?

It is not till we have quaffed the sweet cup to its bitter dregs—not till we have watched with sinking hearts the gradual decay of the sunshine—not till we have seen the flowers which we so tenderly cherished, decline beneath the chilling frost of indifference, and seen the bright future we had so confidently regarded, fade into the miserable past—not till then do we recognise, too late—standing aghast before the truth—that the history of our own lives has become but one more page to swell that thick, but useless volume—the

experience of others—the book we once so scoffingly derided.

But no such thoughts came to Eveline Greville, who believed in her destroyer as a woman—Heaven help her!—always does believe in the man she loves; and, so believing, she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Oh! judge none lost, but wait and see
With hopeful pity, not disdain;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain,
And love and glory, that may raise
This soul to God in after days."

ADELAIDE PROCTOR.

ENTREATED by her lover, Eveline gradually learnt to mask her feelings, but the misery which an unlawful and all-absorbing love could not fail to bring to an erring, yet still pure-minded—still uncorrupted—woman, told visibly upon her.

I can hear some of my readers indignantly exclaim at my calling an erring woman pure-minded; but oh! my sisters,

"Judge none lost, but wait and see
With hopeful pity, not disdain."

Our stringent conceptions of morality are very

useful as social restraints, nor am I prepared to say how far it would be wise to relax them, but at the same time they are apt to make us very cruel in our notions as regard women, and too often make us condemn, as the most degraded of her sex, each one who has been led away from the path of virtue.

A woman may love, "not wisely but too well," and yet not be morally and utterly degraded. I do not say that her mind may not —nay, it must—for a time, be warped; but she is not always lost, as we are too apt to imagine.

The woman who is the victim of a true love rarely becomes vicious, for she loves the *man*, not the sex; and her passion is not the coarse feeling which men attach to the word, but a feeling of which I do not think they can appreciate the meaning—the passion of the heart—which more or less a woman experiences for every deeply-loved object, be it her child, her mother, or her lover; and it is this very feeling which keeps her pure in thought, true to the *one* man, and saves her from moral and physical degradation.

It has almost passed into an axiom, that it is easier to find a woman who has never sinned than a woman who has sinned with only one.

Let those who know human nature best answer this. It is not the woman who has fallen through the intensity of love who becomes lost and reckless; not only will this one be faithful to the end, but she will shrink from advances of other men which dishonour him, the beloved—it is those unhappy women who have fallen through want, from vanity, from even baser motives, who, no matter what their social status may be, sink into a miserable abyss of sin and debasement. Let us then, while we lay down a universal law for the guidance of society, show some discrimination in applying it.

Intense as Eveline's love was for Vandeleur, it did not blind her to her sinfulness, nor shut her eyes to her shame, or to her reverence for virtue, and it was this innate purity of heart and her deep love for him which saved her from worse evil.

> "The shadow of his presence made *her* world
> A Paradise. All familiar things he touched,
> All common words he spoke, became to her
> Like forms and sounds of a diviner world."

And the painful instinct that she had by that very love forfeited all claim to his respect, made her cling to his affection with a gratitude that was pathetic in its tenderness,

divine in its spirit, so humble and trusting was it.

Let no one think that I am excusing *sin*. God forbid. But the misery it entails may surely make us lenient to the *sinner*, and induce us to leave the punishment in higher hands than ours. No one who knew Eveline Greville as I did, knew her innate purity and truth, her terrible love for Vandeleur, and the retribution that fell upon her, but would feel the deepest, the tenderest pity for one so erring, yet so uncorrupted.

Pardon the digression.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard, and many a time
The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too delighted ear; for several virtues
Have I liked several women; never any
With so full soul but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed; but thou
So peerless, so perfect art, created
Of every creature's best."

SHAKESPEARE.

It did not by any means escape notice that Lord Lorton—the sceptic in love—the man least given to woman's society—had of late become much less keen about sport; and instead of following the partridges, or walking after the grouse, had taken to wander forth with a volume of Shakespeare somewhat ostentatiously protruding from the pocket of his shooting-jacket — for whose edification was best known to himself; but as Mrs. Greville

was apt to go out sketching whenever it was fine, I doubt if his lordship enacted melancholy Jaques.

As for Frank Lovell, the handsome young Guardsman, all the world was free to see his devotion—he adored Mrs. Greville, and would win her if he could—why should he hide it?

There was nothing very wonderful in him—he would never have set the Thames on fire—but he was so cheery, so pleasant, so joyous—just one of those men who have a singular attraction for women—who often win a love that wiser and greater men have sighed for in vain. But careless, easy, good-tempered dandy as he was, there was a cool, undaunted courage within, that could neither see nor dream of peril. The perfumed favourites of our Charles II. were not lacking in that same manly quality which a woman recognises by instinct and prizes so highly; and for later examples, we have only to remember how our delicately nurtured Guards bore themselves in the Crimea.

Lovell was not unlike, in outward appearance, what Vandeleur had been twelve years before; the same lithe, graceful figure, the same colouring—he might have passed for a younger brother; but an impartial physiogno-

mist would have read greater generosity in the broader brow, and greater depth of purpose in the finer cut lips and squarer chin; but Eveline did not particularise, and because she thought him like

"The embodied vision of her fairest dream,"

unconsciously showed him more gentleness than to any other man; and a tender smile would often part her soft lips, as her eyes rested on a face so like one that was to her, of all, inexpressibly dear. And he basked in the sunshine of those sweet smiles which he could not but see fell to him alone, and was supremely happy!

The partridges were likely to have an easy time of it, for Charles Gaveston, the handsome curate, had started, to him, a new dogma, *i.e.*, that field sports were unbefitting a son of the Church; so there was much chaffing among those who, but last season, had found it hard work to hold their own over the turnip fields against the "parson," who, do what they would, invariably made the biggest bag, and who breasted the stiffest Scotch hills against the best of them, but Mr. Gaveston was not to be laughed out of his

new doctrine, and laying down his gun for the pencil, he became an ardent disciple of—Mrs. Greville.

Lord Gaveston saw and laughed—well pleased.

Lady Gaveston shook her head and smiled.

"I wish she would marry Lorton," she said to her husband, discussing the matter, "but I see no signs on her side. The most dangerous man here is Frank Lovell; he is so good-looking, so charming, with that careless, *débonnair* but attentive manner of his, and I sometimes fear she is not quite insensible in that quarter; and I should so like her to marry Lorton; she is just the wife to suit him, and the only woman I ever heard him honestly praise. Why did you ask him?—Lovell I mean. It was most unwise."

"Well, you see," said Lord Gaveston, arranging his tie in his wife's dressing-glass, and dodging to get a fair view over her head, "Tamworth asked to bring him, and—and, I did not think about matrimonial traps," and taking up one of Lady Gaveston's hair-brushes, he proceeded to adjust his parting, frowning fearfully at himself the while.

"Good heavens! Gaveston, what frightful

faces you are making!" exclaimed his wife, turning round.

"Am I?" said he, unconcernedly, and settling his neck in his collar. "So you think Lovell dangerous. Who is coming to-day?"

"Everybody."

"That's a large order."

"Don't be absurd. Tell me, can you send for my father and mother, and the Montserrats?"

"Easily, I'll take the drag if you like."

"*Don't* you see the duchess on the top of a drag! to say nothing of my mother, who would scream the whole way, or go inside!"

"I never could see the use of screaming; what makes women do it? I say, have you any more ugly ones coming down?"

"Why, we have not one ugly face here except Mrs. Vandeleur," exclaimed Pamela."

"And by Jove! she *is* ugly. The sourest visage! It always takes away my appetite at breakfast if she gets near me. Poor Van! I am sorry for him," and this time Lord Gaveston sought his wife's, and not his own face in the mirror; "one can stand an ugly woman at dinner, though it is not preferable then; but in the morning, ye gods!"

"Depend upon it," replied Lady Gaveston,

"she is just the wife to suit him. He wants ballast, and a strict hand over him. She keeps him in order."

"H—m," quoth Lord Gaveston, doubtfully, and sauntering into his own room for his coat, "I tell you who does that same, and that's Gwen, and by George! how pretty she has grown, what has she done to herself?"

Lady Gaveston laughed, and passed her white finger over her own darkly-pencilled eyebrows and eyelashes.

"That's the dodge, is it?" said her husband, "it is a monstrous improvement, but I am glad you have no need for such helps. Pierce has grown confoundedly sulky, have you remarked that?"

"The old Gaveston blood comes out in Gwen," replied Pamela, "no man will ever bend her to his will; and tiny little fairy as she is, Humphrey has found his match. Gwen never knew what fear or yielding meant from the day she was born."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Music! oh, how faint, how weak,
Language fades before thy spell!
Why should feeling ever speak
When thou canst breathe her soul so well?"

MOORE.

"I'll play the chorus; and as our modern Greeks
Run through our code of expletics sublime,
Oh! ah! ai! ai! with neither tune nor rhyme,
Whose choriambics choice unhinge our jaws,
Or set our teeth on edge like filing saws."

"THE AGE." BAILEY.

IT was a wet afternoon, and the whole party had gathered earlier than usual in the hall, where Mrs. Falconer was, as she termed it, "putting some of the men through their facings," for Lady Gwen's private theatricals.

Lovell was trying to persuade Eveline to act with him, but she positively disclaimed all intention of appearing on the boards, a decision the reverend Charles highly approved.

"Not for the reasons you think," she said, with a half sad smile, which caused him to draw his chair nearer to hers, with the thought, "Will she never forget that husband of hers?"

"I do not see the least harm in theatricals," she pursued; "only I cannot act."

"Let me give you private lessons. I am sure I could teach you," urged Lovell.

"You shut up! do you remember how you disgraced yourself at our theatricals?" inquired Darrell.

"I was not inspired then, my son," coolly rejoined Lovell; "I could act with Mrs. Greville. Will you try?"

No, Mrs. Greville would not try.

In good sooth she had no spirit for such doings. The heart knoweth its own bitterness—and hers was too crushed ever to rise again; shame, like a canker worm, had eaten into it till mirth and she had parted for ever, or if its hollow semblance at times flashed in mockery from her lips,

"'Twas but as ivy leaves around the ruined turret wreathe,
All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and gray beneath."

Mr. Gaveston was more successful. He asked her to sing, and the request being backed by

Pamela, who saw that Mrs. Vandeleur was being greatly exercised in her mind by her husband's flagrant flirtation with Mrs. Falconer, Eveline sat down to the piano, and after a moment's thought she sang the following exquisite, but mournful words, by Shelley, which, set to a melodious air, swept round the vaulted hall, as a lament from spirit-land.

"That time is dead for ever, child,
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever!
We look on the past
And stare aghast,
At the spectres wailing, pale and ghast,
Of hopes which thou and I beguiled
To death, on life's dark river.

"The stream we gazed on then rolled by;
Its waves were unreturning;
But yet we stand
In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee,
In the light of life's dim morning."

"What makes you sing so sadly?" said Lord Lorton, who had drawn close to her; "you whose world should be so bright? Young, beautiful, rich in worldly goods, still richer in friends, why dwell so morbidly on the past?"

"We know the past, we feel the present, but who shall tell the future?

> 'Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?
> Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
> The wide winding caves of the peopled tomb?'"

said Eveline, sadly.

"I should like to weed your library," rejoined Lorton. "I wish you would not read Shelley."

"You read him yourself, it appears," retorted Evelyn.

"True. Strong meats may be good for me, but hurtful to the weak."

"You think me so weak then?" said Eveline, in a very low voice, her fingers wandering unconsciously over the ivory keys.

"I don't think you are strong minded. I hate a strong-minded woman. Will you sing me 'Ruth?' It is an especial favourite of mine."

Eveline looked at him fairly surprised.

"Why not?" said he, answering her look. "Do you think I could not appreciate a Ruth who would say such words to me?"

"I do not know—I am not sure—I do not think you would believe in her—I am not sure but that you would sneer at her."

"Not if she felt what she said. I never sneer at truth, only at its flimsy semblance.

We will discuss the question this evening. Meantime, will you sing ?"

"It seems your maxim to doubt everyone, till you prove him true. It is a cruel creed, and very unjust to your fellow-creatures," said Eveline. "I reverse it; and I have never had reason to repent my trust. It would make me miserable to think that everybody was deceiving me."

"I should be sorry were it otherwise," replied Lord Lorton. "Trustfulness is a great charm in a woman; it is a proof of truth and purity in her, but of weakness in a man who has passed his boyhood."

It was getting too dark for him to see the painful flush and sudden tears which his words had evoked. She did not answer him, but played the prelude of the song for which he had asked, while she strove to steady her voice.

Vandeleur did not care much about music, but jealous of Lorton's always engrossing her, he joined the group at the piano. The mere fact of his being near her seemed to give her new life; and with one quick, upward glance at him, she poured forth her whole soul in those simple words of ineffable love, thinking that had they two not met only *too late*, thus would she have sung to him.

He read her feelings, and his heart thrilled as her glorious voice, to which she gave its full power, swelled in the air, filling the large oak-panelled hall with the rich Italian tones, which no northern voice ever approaches.

Her audience "paused love-charmed" to hear her; every heart was still, fearful, as it were, of losing the last wandering echo of a voice so marvellously sweet, yet so full and round, that it scarcely seemed a thing of earth.

The silence, engendered by deep feeling, was first broken by Mrs. Falconer, who, unable to resist planting another sting in Mrs. Vandeleur, flitted up to her, saying, with charming simplicity,

"Now *that* is how a wife should love her husband. I am sure you felt you were singing to yours, did you not?" And Mrs. Falconer, knowing that her victim had never left the parental roof, buzzed away like the wicked little gnat she was.

"Do you think I could disbelieve a Ruth who could sing to me like *that?*" whispered Lord Lorton to the songstress, leaving her side ere she could turn round.

Vandeleur murmured in her ear words that made her heart throb as she left the piano.

"I say, that makes a fellow feel as if he had been to church," was Bob Markham's eulogy. "I vote we have something jolly after that," and, heedless of Charles Gaveston's indignant rejoinder, he made a dash at a stand of musical instruments, and seizing a drum, thrust it into Darrell's hands, saying, "Here, you can play that, I know; I can do a bit on the concertina, and Digby is a regular swell on the cornet—he practises in his chambers while waiting for briefs—and, Castletown, can't you play a horn? I've known you do it coming home from Greenwich. We'll be orchestra, and everyone who can sing—join! Let's have the 'Huntsman's Chorus.' Digby, you and I will lead off."

But Digby had no notion of making a fool of himself before Eveline. If he had only known how little she thought about him!

"Come, no shirking, Digby," cried the young men, entering into the fun of the thing *con amore*.

Digby was not to be entreated.

"Where's Tamworth?" said Lord Castletown; "he can play the cornet. Tam, old fellow, where are you?"

"Hullo! who's using bad language?" said Lord Lorton.

"You be shot!" was the response.

"What's the row?" asked Lord Tamworth, rousing himself from the depths of an arm-chair.

"They can't make enough without your help, it seems," said Lady Gaveston.

"Wake up, old boy; we are getting up a concert," said Lord Castletown, pushing the instrument into his hand; "we're going to rehearse."

"The 'Huntsman's Chorus!'" cried Bob. "I'll begin, and then you all take it up. Can no one play the horn?" he exclaimed in despair. "Digby, you must."

But Digby would see him at Jericho first.

"Will *you*?" said Markham to Gaveston.

"Anything for a quiet life," responded he; "give it here."

"Now then, when I stamp my foot—" began Bob.

> "'Upon the bosom of the ground, rush forth
> And bind the boy!'"

continued Mrs. Falconer, laughing.

"Not a bit of it—apologising all the same—the drum comes in," replied Bob.

There was a most ungodly row, but nothing daunted, energetic little Bob flourished his concertina to mark time—a hopeless task;

he stamped in despair, at which signal the drum came to the rescue at the wrong moment, whereupon Bob shook his musical instrument at the offender, and called loudly upon "Voices!"

In the midst of this uproar, the clanging of the door-bell was unheard, the folding-doors were thrown open, and four or five servants in livery, looking as sedate and stolid as if carved in wood, ushered in—

"The Duke and Duchess of Montserrat."

"Mr. and Mrs. Challenor."

"Colonel and Lady Julia Forrester."

"The Marquis of Weybridge."

"Captain Dacres."

"Mr. Devereux."

"You must have thought you had driven up to a lunatic asylum by mistake," said Lady Gaveston, coming forward to meet her guests.

"I hope you will engage us for your first concert next season, duchess!" said Lord Castletown, shaking hands.

"We can try it again, if you like," put in unabashed Bob.

"Did you not see my father and mother at the station?" asked Pamela; "we expected them by the same train."

"A telegram for your ladyship," said a servant, presenting it.

"'So sorry, missed train, coming by next,'" read Pamela. "Is not this tiresome, Gaveston? When does the next train come in?" she asked of the servant.

"Half-past nine, my lady."

"Well, send and meet it," said Lord Gaveston, whom nothing ruffled. "The only difficulty I see, is that they will miss dinner."

Challenor greeted Eveline, whom he had not seen since that day in Wales, with his usual quiet, reserved manner; and she, forgetting at the moment their last parting, held out her hand, saying cordially she was very glad to see him, when suddenly she coloured, not with anger—she had forfeited that right—but with shame.

"Let us be friends," she said.

"With all my heart," said he, fervently, and clasping her hand; "who would not be honoured by the friendship of one like you?"

Eveline turned away with a painful blush.

Væ victis! surely there is more sorrow in laying down our laurels, than joy in crowning ourselves with the triumphant wreath. The vanquished know an agony of which the

victorious have no conception, and for which no after conquest can ever atone.

Lady Gaveston chanced to see Eveline's embarrassment when Challenor spoke to her, and for a moment, it is no flower of speech to say that her heart sank within her; for Eveline was one of the few people she loved, and the thought that Mrs. Greville was not insensible to his devotion, fell like a thunderbolt upon her; if this, indeed, were so, her strange manner—her pale looks—her forced gaiety—were at once accounted for; but when Pamela saw her cordial, affectionate meeting with Mrs. Challenor, she smiled again.

"She could not do *that* if she loved the husband," thought she.

But the following morning, on looking out of her bed-room window, she could not evade a feeling of uneasiness on seeing Eveline and Challenor walking out, at what seemed to her, a very early hour. She was too loyal to her friend to impart her fears even to her husband; but her bright face was somewhat troubled as she descended to the breakfast-room.

It was a lovely September morning—a lingering memory of the past summer—the windows were open, and several of her guests had gathered on the bright sunlit terrace.

"You had an early walk this morning," said Pamela, with that deep, searching look of hers.

But Eveline having nothing to conceal as regarded her walk, did not remark it, and met her friend's eyes with the old child-like confidence and affection, and replied that the beauty of the mornings often tempted her into an early walk, "and a kindred spirit seized Mr. Challenor apparently, unless he is always an early riser, which is more than I can say," she added, looking laughingly at the men seated round the very late breakfast table, "of any other man present, with one exception."

Lady Gaveston breathed again. There was nothing connected with Mr. Challenor.

"Burning a candle at both ends is wasteful," observed Mr. Devereux, always among the latest.

"I never knew you took morning walks," said Lovell, taking a place at the breakfast-table next to Eveline.

"Mrs. Greville is resolved to show us a good example," said Lorton, on her other side; "but it was not generous to keep those walks a secret—you do not know to what heroic efforts they might have impelled us."

"To frightful havoc among the game pies," replied Eveline, laughing, "that is the reason Mr. Gaveston is so hungry at breakfast; if you all followed his example there would be a famine in the land."

"Now, Mrs. Greville, that's too bad," said Charles Gaveston, helping himself liberally to cutlets.

"Since when have you taken to the early worm, Charley?" laughed his brother.

"Mrs. Greville, I hope you mark that. Gaveston, I cannot congratulate you on your definitions," said Charles, with mock seriousness, and the laugh turned against Lord Gaveston, while Lovell murmured something to Eveline about the first valse that evening.

"This state of affairs is quite unbearable, Eveline," said Vandeleur, who had contrived to somewhat detach her from the groups who were sauntering about the gardens after breakfast, avoiding the appearance of a *tête-à-tête*, but sufficiently distant for no one to overhear their words. "I never can get speech of you now, and I leave to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" she exclaimed, with a *serrement de cœur*.

"I do; and when am I to see you again? I begin to think you do not love me after all."

She replied not in words, but he read the eloquent answer in the fathomless depths of her violet eyes, which were mutely raised to his, and he was content.

"I half dread leaving you here among all these young fellows, who I see, are madly in love with you."

"Dear Henry, what is any man to me but you?" said Eveline, with tender reproach.

"Mrs. Greville, you are fond of roses; let me offer you this Gloire de Dijon," said a voice close at her side, and turning round with crimson cheeks which faded into deathly pallor at the next moment, she beheld Lord Lorton.

She could not tell whether he had overheard her words or not, his face was quite unconscious.

"Will you take my arm? You look quite tired; morning walks do not suit you, that is evident."

Mrs. Greville took the proffered arm, too much alarmed to refuse it; but he talked on so quietly, asking her about her place, her roses, that she was re-assured and felt that he could not have heard her fatal words, and she breathed again.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Hey day! what a sweep of vanity comes this way,
They dance! they are mad women!
Like madness is the glory of this life,
As this pomp shows to a little oil and root."

TIMON OF ATHENS.

"My mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin this fearful date
With this night's revels."

SHAKESPEARE.

GAVESTON ABBEY wore its bravest array. The county for many miles around had been bidden to the ball; for Pamela, desirous of being regarded with popularity in her future home, had taken no little trouble about her invitations; and she herself, looking brilliant in white satin and the Pierrepoint diamonds, which Lady Pierrepoint had insisted on her wearing that night, was receiv-

ing her guests with a cordiality that won every heart.

The ball was not what the newspapers call "select;" "but," as she said to her husband, "the house is large enough to prevent any clashing, and depend upon it, it is the right thing; always keep up the traditions."

"What a queer lot you have got together, Pam," said Lady Gwen, superciliously regarding some of the earlier arrivals; "how can you ask such people? What are they—farmers' wives and daughters?"

"Most likely, only we call them yeomen in Yorkshire."

"*We?*" said Gwen; "how you identify yourself with——"

"*My husband,*" interrupted Pamela, with a proud, happy look at Lord Gaveston. "His people are *my* people."

"Ah, well! *chacun à son goût,*" said her ladyship, taking Lord Weybridge's arm and sauntering into the ball-room where she was soon whirling round with him.

"I don't like your valsing with that man," said Pierce as Lord Weybridge left her for a second to speak to a lady near.

"Don't you?" said his wife, looking up with a most provoking smile, cold and resolute

as steel. "I am *so* sorry, for he is the best valseur I know. Now, Lord Weybridge, let us have another turn before the crush comes," and with a defiant look at her husband she placed her small, daintily kidded hand on her partner's shoulder, and whirled away.

Pierce gnawed his black moustache as he looked on with darkening brow. That little, white, fair thing had the best of it, as she always had; she never lost her temper: nothing put her out: but adamant was not more unyielding.

A ball is a trite enough matter to most of us, yet I fancy there are few to whom it has become but a "tinkling cymbal," but who look back with wild longing and regret to that time when they too could join in pleasures that a "law austere," and a world-worn wisdom have taught them to regard as youth's follies. And though there comes a time when

> "The romance of life
> Should be shut up and closed with double clasp,"

yet who would not welcome back their youth, with all its delicious "follies," as our sterner wisdom now calls them, but which once had another name?

It is not the *pleasures* that fade—it is *we*

who fade, and the butterflies shun us: and well it is—as all things are well, being so—bringing good out of evil; but let us not despise youth—the bright, sweet spring-time of life, nor ridicule follies which are but the germs of that wisdom which has bleached our older heads, and seared our colder hearts.

Eveline was talking to Lord Okehampton, who, proud and pleased to see the popularity of his favourite daughter, listened with a smile to Mrs. Greville's warm encomiums; but handsome as Lady Gaveston looked, no one could have disputed the palm of beauty with Eveline.

In her sea-green tulle dress trimmed with water-lilies, her golden hair hanging in longer curls than usual on her white shoulders, and looped up on her head with diamond stars and water-lilies, her cheeks flushed with a soft colour, her coral lips parted as she still breathed quickly after that rapid valse with Lovell, her dark blue eyes sparkling and her white bosom heaving, Eveline Greville was an incarnation of beauty rarely seen.

So thought Lord Lorton, who stood watching her. His father turned to speak to Pamela; at that moment Vandeleur passed, and Eveline returned his look with one in

which the light of love had not died out, when Lord Lorton came to claim her hand for the valse then beginning. She turned at his voice, and said with a smile, and eyes in which the tenderness still lingered, "I thought you had forgotten me."

Lady Gaveston saw the look — saw her brother return it—saw the black-fringed eyelids droop at the look—and though she did not hear the whispered, "Forgotten? *You!*" as he bent to encircle her waist, she drew her own conclusions: Lovell went down in her barometer, and her brother stood at fair.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," said she, aloud.

"Than dancing with me, I hope," took up a voice.

She laughed, and taking Frank Lovell's arm, joined the whirling circle.

"How perfectly you valse," said Eveline to her partner, "it is the poetry of motion. Where did you learn?"

He laughed. "Where, I fancy, there was more poetry of revolution than evolution. Are you ready for another turn?"

Eveline and Vandeleur had mutually agreed not to dance together, but jealous of seeing

her so beset by others, he begged for one valse, but she shook her head.

"Better not; besides, I am engaged—I am afraid three times over—for every dance."

"I don't wonder," said he, "I never saw you look so lovely."

The quick, bashful look that a compliment from him always called up, enchanted him.

"Mrs. Greville, you promised me this quadrille, but as I never dance, will you come into the picture-gallery with me? there is a portrait so like you: I want to know who it is." Mr. Challenor was the speaker.

"Now that's a shame!" cried one or two men, who had been imploring for that same dance; "if you don't dance, give others a chance."

"Not at all," said Challenor, keeping the hand he had secured. "I can enjoy a lady's society without dancing, and claim my right, unless Mrs. Greville decides otherwise."

Challenor was anathematised as he walked off with his prize.

"This is very kind of you," said he, leading the way to the picture-gallery.

"Not at all," said Eveline, fearing he was attaching too much consequence to her acqui-

escence; "I am really very glad to rest awhile. Where is this picture?"

"Have I sinned past all redemption?" he asked, as they entered the gallery. "It is more than eight months since last we met."

"Pray do not revert to it—let it be as if it had not been," said Eveline, struggling with her emotion; "and if I spoke too hardly to one who still cares for my esteem, my *friendship*, I ask forgiveness. *Friends* let us ever be."

"Thank you," said he, gravely.

A horrible thought obtruded itself that perhaps he knew about her and Vandeleur that he thus dare speak of that day; but a look at the honest face, worn with inward struggles, told her that she had misjudged him. So high was Challenor's opinion of her, that he would as soon have thought that one of the statues in the gallery they were traversing could be warmed into flesh and blood, as that she, his idol, his ideal of all that was pure and lovely, could transgress. Ah! if women could only believe how far more precious they are to men, while they are unattainable, there would be fewer breaking hearts in the world. If they would only believe that

"The lovely toy so fiercely sought,
Hath lost its charm by being caught,
For every touch that wooed its stay,
Hath brushed its brighter hues away."

"This is the picture I meant," said Challenor, pausing before the portrait of a curly-headed boy with bright, laughing, blue eyes, one of Lawrence's happiest bits.

"That is my father," rejoined Eveline; "is it not sad to think he was disinherited for marrying my beautiful mother? If you had only known her!"

"You could not have been like her, for as you stand there you might be the twin sister of that boy," replied Challenor, looking from one to the other.

"I am often told I am like the father whom I cannot remember. I used to rejoice in that resemblance, for as a child I fancied that my mother loved me the more for it; but come and look at my grandfather, it is such a stern, hard face; one could imagine him utterly implacable; yet had he known my sweet mother, I think even he would have been softened."

"I knew Lord Pierrepoint," said Challenor, crossing the room with her; "he had strong prejudices, and few things are harder to com-

bat. In his later days, when I knew him, he was a very unhappy and a very lonely man. Yes, it is very like him, and as you say, it is a stern face."

"The same expression, though in a lesser degree, runs through a great many of their portraits," said Eveline, talking on hurriedly, dreading lest her companion should speak of himself; "here is one, Mistress Margaret Gaveston, whom I should have been sorry to affront. It is a Hogarth, so you see the severity is of ancient date."

"It does not seem to have descended to the present man; how happy Lady Gaveston looks."

"And is," replied Eveline, "and deserves to be. She is a thorough Lorton, but Lady Gwen is a Gaveston all over; here is a portrait by Kneller, the very image of her, the same colouring, the same exquisite hands and arms, the same cold, resolute look, and the same steel-coloured eyes; it might pass for her portrait."

"Do you know that *you* have the same look? only with you the cold hardness is changed into resolution, softened perhaps by your warm Italian blood."

"*Che nasce di gallina convien che rozzuola,*" laughed Eveline.

"Rather say, *bon sang ne peut mentir,*" replied Challenor, a remark that called up the hot blood over her face, neck, and arms, to curdle the next moment about her heart, leaving her pale as death. Alas! that a compliment should have power to sting her!

Challenor, seeing her agitation, not unnaturally asked himself whether he were not only forgiven, but thought of with a kindliness he dared not hope for.

"Mrs. Greville, I have been looking for you everywhere," said Lovell; "this is our valse."

"Is it?" she said, taking his arm with a sense of relief.

"By the way, Mrs. Greville," said Charles Gaveston, who had followed Lovell into the gallery, "do you remember our talking of the haunted staircase, where I saw the ghost? It leads into this room by a secret door. I wonder if we could open it."

Eveline sank on a chair, turning very pale.

"Pray, pray do not!" she said, faintly.

"You are not afraid of ghosts here, are you?" said Charles, laughing, and trying the lock, which, however, did not yield.

"It's very silly of me," said Eveline, rallying, as she saw that the door would not open; "but I have grown so nervous; besides, suppose," she added, trying to speak archly, "Sister Louise came upon us!"

"My belief is, that her lover came to her rescue with pick-axe and shovel, and that they married and lived very happy for ever after," said Charles, laughing.

"Poor thing, I hope so," said Eveline, pityingly.

"There is a lady here who would say, 'Serve her right.'"

"You are detaining Mrs. Greville, and we are losing our valse," exclaimed Lovell, impatiently.

"I really could not dance," said Eveline; "but if you would get me some tea, I should be so glad."

"The worst thing in the world for the nerves," said Charles, following them down to the tea-room.

"She shall have just whatever she likes," said Lovell. "Come, Gaveston, you take yourself off; you have done mischief enough already."

Eveline gave him a grateful glance, and unconsciously clung closer to his arm as she

shrank from the other, whose ghost stories she dreaded.

"The tea-room is frightfully crammed and hot," said Lovell; "sit down here in the hall —here is a nice quiet corner—and I will fetch you the tea."

He tenderly placed her on a sofa, and drew a footstool to her feet, while Charles stood with his back to the fire, looking on, determined not to give his rival a chance.

"It is quite cold," said she, with a shudder.

"I am afraid I frightened you," said Charles, sitting down by her side in the very place which Lovell had reserved for himself. "I am so sorry; I had no idea you were really nervous."

"It is very foolish," stammered Eveline.

"Hang it! Charles, this is too bad," exclaimed Lovell, as, coming back with the tea, he saw his place occupied. "Are you telling more ghost stories? I warn you, I do not like them either."

"All right, old fellow," said Charles, getting up on his long legs, and moving slowly off.

"Pray let us go into the ball-room," said Eveline, putting down her cup, and not at all liking the aspect of affairs.

Charles, seeing them once more in the crowd, went his own way.

But Frank Lovell had no idea of being deterred from any decision which he had once come to; so, leading his companion through the crowd, they found themselves in a large temporary conservatory, filled with flowers and plants, interspersed with seats, and lighted by the soft effulgence of rose-coloured lamps.

Here, a fit place for the old, old story—worn thread-bare, yet always new—did he pour out the tale of as true and knightly a love as ever fell to woman's lot to hear.

Eveline wept—and wept bitterly, too—as she spoke her answer, gently as she could word it; but leaving no crevice in which love could find a hold. She wept, not only for the pain she was inflicting—had so unintentionally caused—but from the sense of her own unworthiness of such love—wept to hear him exalt her into that of which she fell, how short, she knew best.

Lovell had measured her feelings by his own—only that. It is a mistake we do make sometimes, and which, to some of us, gives a death wound; and Frank Lovell was one of these, as he pleaded as though for dear life.

But the sight of her tears made him forget his own sorrow.

"Dear Mrs. Greville," said he, trying to steady his voice—but at four-and-twenty it is hard to speak bravely when the heart is breaking—"do not weep, do not distress yourself. I feel now that it was presumption on my part, supposing you could ever think of me; I did hope it, or I would not thus have distressed you. Will you forgive me? I shall never forget you; and if I could ever be of use to you, believe me, I would shed my last blood in your service."

Eveline sank on a seat, and covered her weeping face.

"I dare not hope those tears are for me," said Lovell, wistfully, as he stood over her; "though one does hear that angels weep for human sorrows."

"Spare me, I entreat you!" sobbed Eveline. "I would ask you to forgive me for leading you—God knows unintentionally—into this error; only it seems almost an insult. I never thought you cared for me, believe me."

"It has been my own fault," he replied, sadly. "Let us part in kindness. I shall always think of you as I do now. Will you not say good-bye?"

She held out both her hands, and raised her tear-stained face, the sight of which tried all his manhood. Oh! for the right to dry those tears! But he felt they were not shed for him. He could not trust his voice, and silently raised her hands to his lips, looked at her with a yearning, hopeless look, and, bending forward, kissed her forehead, with a knightly reverence that did her no discourtesy, and turned away without another word.

He was not the first man she had refused; but she knew that this was the truest, noblest heart that had ever been laid at her feet for her to trample to death; and an inner, though unacknowledged, feeling told her that had it not been for *that other*, she might have loved this loyal gentleman. But the sacrifice only enhanced Vandeleur's worth; for it is in woman's nature to love in proportion to the sacrifices she makes: they are so much incense burnt in honour of her idol, and they surround him with a glory of which she alone sees the value. Does not a mother give a greater tithe of love to the child that costs her most? So ever with us women.

The object of her thoughts approached. She hurriedly dried her tears, and began putting on her gloves. Her agitation did not escape

him, but evading his questions, she took his arm and wandered with him about the conservatory, where palms, orange-trees, ferns, and other plants lent a tropical effect to the scene.

No need to repeat their conversation, but he eagerly spoke of when they would meet again.

"Would that we need never part," added he.

She gave him a quick look. What did he mean? would he indeed take her away, where though the sin would not be less, at least the terrible deceit in which she now lived would be over? to go to the world's end with him? to live for him alone? the "desert"—anywhere—"for their dwelling-place:" was this what he meant?

Oh, no! too selfish to give up this woman, he had no notion of changing relations, which, to him as a man, caused neither fears nor anxieties; and Eveline saw that she had misread his words.

They unexpectedly came face to face with Lord Lorton, who told her that he had been searching for her.

"I was more fortunate, you see," said Vandeleur.

"So I perceive," replied the other, dryly. "I came to take you into supper," addressing Eveline; but she had promised Mr. Vandeleur that pleasure, so Lord Lorton was forced to be content with walking on her other side—a position which he would not relinquish during supper. It was very polite, but Vandeleur would have gladly dispensed with it; he wanted to have Mrs. Greville to himself, so did Lord Lorton.

"You promised me the first valse after supper," said this latter, as she rose from the table.

"Did I? Then I am ready to redeem the promise," she said.

As they entered the ball-room, she looked furtively round for Lovell, but he was not there, and she breathed more freely.

"Are you and Vandeleur very old friends?" said Lorton, putting his arm round her and floating down the room with her.

The question was unexpected; but with a desperate calmness, she answered without flinching—

"I met him many years ago, but I have only known him for a year or two."

"You do not look as if you could remember 'many years ago,'" said Lorton, looking down

at the fair, youthful face ; "you scarcely look eighteen."

"You may add seven years to that and be within the mark. I am not young, you see."

"Four years younger than myself," was the reply.

"I cannot return your compliment ; you look your age."

"And feel it," said he.

"'Existence depends on time, but actions are our epochs,'" quoted Eveline.

"Do you care for dancing?" was the brusque and irrelevant rejoinder.

"Not in the least. I only dance for want of better employment."

"Then let us walk. I hate dancing."

"How you remind me of Pamela! Pamela as she used to be, when she was sarcastic on the pleasures of the world."

"You quoted 'Manfred,' just now ; may I taboo Byron as well as Shelley?"

"No, indeed you may not ; I will give up Shelley if you like, but not Byron. He is so beautiful;" and she thought how Vandeleur read it to her.

"Very beautiful—dangerously beautiful—like yourself. I should like to label you."

"*Label* me?" repeated Eveline, with undisguised astonishment,

"*Justement, belle dame.* Here is a quiet room, for a wonder; let us go in. How pleasant to get out of that uproar, miscalled pleasure!"

"What a misanthrope you are."

"No, a philosopher. Have *you* found so much pleasure in the world?"

"Oh, yes; the world is very beautiful—very lovely!"

"To those who live in day-dreams of happiness, *perhaps.* Do you see those two people?" said he signing to a lady and gentleman who, arm-in-arm, were apparently examining some plants in a window. The lady's face was bent down, a smile was on it, and her lips were moving.

"Yes," she replied; "I cannot see the man's face, but hers looks very happy. Who are they?"

"I dare say you will never meet them again. Never mind their names. They are living in a fool's paradise, and the bitterest waking that can befall humanity, awaits them. They are married, but not to each other, and—they are in love. In love? Good God! with what?—with sin—with misery—with all that can make this

world a desolation. And the fools look happy."

He appeared not to notice the cold pallor that crept over Eveline's face, as, trembling from head to foot, she sank back in her chair; but not a movement was lost upon him. He went on—

"And how long will that happiness last, think you? Till some fresh face strikes his fancy, when *she* will be forgotten for all that he seems so rapt in her now. See, they are coming this way; look at his face—it looks like truth, does it not? I have seen it look like that before now *with other women.* And the women? God help them! Here comes my mother, let me leave you in her charge. You are a great favourite of hers: and I must go and find my partner."

"I hope I have given her a warning, poor child," said Lorton to himself, as he went his way. "Vandeleur is a scoundrel if he does not let her alone."

"How lovely Eveline looks!" said Pamela, as later in the evening she was walking round on her brother's arm. "Ah! Lorton, she is such a darling! How I wish she were my sister!"

"In your sense, so do I; but you need not

look at me like that," said he, shaking his head; "I am too late in the field."

"What! Frank Lovell? I thought so," said Pamela, fairly dropping her brother's arm to clasp her hands in her despair.

"Poor Lovell! I think he has had his *congé*. I met him just now going to his room, with a haggard, pain-stricken face, not good to see; he answered me, 'All right, old fellow, going to have a smoke,' when I spoke to him. No, it is not Lovell; I would it were, though it would be the death-blow to *my* hopes. I love her well enough to wish to see her happy."

"You *can't* mean Charley?"

"You are a good woman, Pamela, and a good friend, as *I* know; save her if you can, for I think she is in love with Vandeleur."

Lady Gaveston stopped as if she had been shot, but rallying directly, she laughed.

"My dear Lorton, how you startled me. You need be under no apprehension in that quarter. I once thought—feared—Mr. Challenor; and I remember how her eyes blazed, and how she turned on me like a stag about to charge, when I said something about it—the only time I ever saw that the Gaveston spirit was not dead in her. You do not know

her as well as I do. She is too high-principled to fall in love with a married man."

"My experience of life shows that when passion comes in, principle goes to Jericho. I may be wrong, but keep your eye on her; she is too good to come to harm."

On being pressed for his reasons, he told her how he had met them in the conservatory, "talking to Vandeleur with a look I would give a good deal to have bestowed on me."

"It is her way, she can't help it with those great loving eyes of hers, I suppose. I saw her looking at you just the same way, when you asked her to valse, it was that made me hope——"

"Never mind what you hoped, the look was not evoked by me."

"They hardly speak to each other," persisted Pamela.

"A very bad sign. However, use your own discretion—don't be guided by me; but remember, she is in some ways a mere child, she is alone in the world, and is very lovely. Take care of her, Pam."

In vain he strove to arouse her fears, however she promised to look after her.

"I shall leave you to-morrow, for if I saw more to confirm my fears, I should kick that

man. *He* knows well enough what *he* is about, and I don't believe *she* does."

"And yet a woman, Lorton, surely——" began his sister.

"Yes, I know what ladies always say; but recollect, women can be tempted as well as men, dear girl; and when a woman loves a man, by Jove, she will go to the devil for him, and that pretty creature, there, is the very one to do it."

"So I have told her, in less forcible language; but not for a married man."

"I fervently hope not," was the earnest reply.

CHAPTER XX.

"Oh! la belle chose que la poste!"
LETTERS DE SÉVIGNÉ.

"So Lovell has left us," said Lord Gaveston, at a late breakfast the next day, "called away by a telegram before any one was up—so he left word."

More than one pair of eyes turned on Eveline, who was feeding a favourite setter of Lord Gaveston's.

"And I am sorry to say my brother has left us too," said Pamela; "he is such a will-o'-the-wisp, we can never keep him long."

"I think Lorton has been unusually constant," said Lady Gwen; "he has been here a fortnight—a marvel for him. We leave to-morrow for the Roehamptons; Lady Roehampton writes me that she expects you, Lord Weybridge."

Now Gwen cared not one farthing whether Lord Weybridge went there or not, nor whether she ever saw him again; in fact, except for his valsing, she rather disliked him, but simply said this to provoke her husband, an art in which she was an adept.

Not unmindful of the promise which she had made her brother, Lady Gaveston took Eveline as much under her wing as was possible under the circumstances of a very full house of constantly changing guests; but though she kept, what she felt was an ungenerous watch on her friend, she saw nothing to rouse her fears. Lord Lorton's warning had come too late, and only seemed to make both her and Vandeleur more guarded in their manner before others, but more than ever did they live only for each other. Another fortnight passed away at Gaveston, at the end of which time she went to Rossmoor, and Pamela wrote to her brother to assure him how utterly groundless had been his suspicions.

"Mrs. V.," she wrote, "left us the day after our dance, and Gaveston, who you know, is so fond of him, asked him to stay on for the coming *battues*. Had I known of his intention, I would have begged him not to do so,

but as it happened, it was all for the best, for it gave me every opportunity of seeing how ill-founded were your fears, for which I heartily thank Heaven. I cannot conceive a greater misery than the one you apprehend, especially to such a woman as Eveline. Such hopeless wretchedness would kill her. She is looking much better and more herself again.

"As for Mr. Vandeleur, he may have paid her a little more attention after his wife left; but as he was more at ease with every other woman when his dragon was away, there was nothing in that, and if he flirted with one more than another, it was with that charming Madame de Perpignan, and I could not detect anything but an amused smile on Eveline's transparent countenance, when he was very much engrossed with his new flirtation. Now had she been in love with him, she would—at least in her place *I* would—have borne myself very differently. She left us yesterday for Rossmoor, and if I were you, I would offer the duchess a visit—you are an especial favourite there.

"Mr. Lovell—that nice Mr. Lovell, such a nice, gentlemanly young fellow—never showed again after the ball—he was summoned away, he said, by sudden business; and Mr. Digby

equally had a mysterious telegram before breakfast one morning — it became quite alarming, and I began to fear that the epidemic would spread!

"I fancy we can guess who is the culprit, but she will not acknowledge it. Charley has gone up to the Pierrepoints, also, after a day's sketching with Eveline!

"I draw my own conclusions; but as he has taken up his gun again, I hope that a few days among the grouse will restore him.

"Mind you go to Rossmoor."

To this epistle Lord Lorton briefly responded:—

"I am delighted at what you tell me, but till I have further confirmation, I shall not go to Rossmoor, not being desirous of receiving telegrams that take one off to town before breakfast; and if I see more of your charming friend I should most probably play the fool also.

"Yours,

"L."

CHAPTER XXI.

"Pray, I cannot
Tho' inclination be as sharp as will ;
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent ;
And like a man to double purpose bound,
I stand in pause where I should first begin."

HAMLET.

"There's something in me reproves my fault,
But such head-strong, potent fault it is,
It but mocks reproof."

TWELFTH NIGHT.

THE soft autumn days had resigned their reign to winter, who ruled with a sharp rule for some months; and then the fair young spring deposed the grisly monarch, and held her court amidst the fresh and garish toilettes of nature's brightest garb. The stately horse-chestnuts put forth their blossoms to welcome their sovereign, spreading the bridal robe over their young leaves, as spring and sunshine once more came hand in hand to sway the

world. One bright blossom succeeded another in starting forward to do homage to their welcome liege-lady, and feathered vocalists proclaimed in joyous concert, among the leafy boughs, the new accession.

So lovely, so beautiful was nature, that it was doubly sad that sin should exist where all was so perfect.

Since parting at Gaveston, Vandeleur and Mrs. Greville had continually met, either at the houses of their common friends, or else at Llanfenydd, where he contrived to run down whenever she was at home. As continuance in any one course always to a certain extent blunts the senses on that subject, Eveline had learnt to bear her sin with outward equanimity; and none who met her in society could have guessed the wild, mad love that beat in her heart. If there were any change in her, it was that she had become even more than ever patient and gentle with others, gave more largely in charity, and spared neither time nor money in alleviating any sorrow that came to her knowledge; and many a woman did she save (for I knew Mrs. Greville very well, and many of her charities were done through me) from the misery of sin. It would seem as if by such outward deeds she

was endeavouring to take from her own heart the sting of guilt, and appease an offended God. She was cited as a model of Christian virtues; but the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and who but herself knew that for months past, her knees no longer knelt in prayer? How could she pray when she was setting Divine laws at defiance? How lift up her heart in humility and faith, when she was cherishing a sin which condemned her every hour of her life?

"If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And we are told that the man went away sorrowing, for he had great possessions.

I ween there are other riches on earth besides those great possessions which the man in Scripture could not give up, and which are even harder to part with, and which equally shut from us the eternal treasures.

Torn by the conflict between her love and her sense of guilt, Mrs. Greville took to philosophic readings, seeking relief and palliation of her sin in those works which laugh at Christianity as a myth; but which, written by erudite scholars, the cleverest men of their several days, in clear, powerful language, uphold, by specious arguments, theories deduced

from human reasoning that have a fearful fascination for those who abandon themselves to such studies; for terribly as she was sinning, she was too innately truthful to attempt to palliate her life, or to hope for pardon so long as she would not lay her gift upon the altar; and it was this which made her seek in such books, which she read with avidity, for proofs of there being no foundation for that creed which condemned both him and her alike. They led her further and further away from the pure light, till, like a feather blown about by a wind that has no power to move a weightier bulk, her weaker mind became entangled in a labyrinth from which stronger ones might have emerged unperilled.

It is good not to touch pitch, and it is good not to read sceptical books to the exclusion of that only one which can keep head and heart true.

> "Drink deep, or touch not the Pierian spring,
> There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
> And drinking largely sobers them again."

Ceasing to consult the only compass that can keep us to our reckoning, but steering her frail bark by her own laws of navigation, Eveline was rapidly drifting on to those quicksands from which few escape.

Vandeleur was not a religious man, far from it, but he shared a feeling in common with most of his sex, that women should be so, and he had a vague idea that they generally were religious; and had he known what was passing in Eveline's mind, he would have been very much astounded, not to say shocked. It never occurred to him that a flower cannot be robbed of its best beauty and not suffer; but hearing of her charities, her kindness, her self-abnegation, he delighted to think that she was so "good and religious."

As though she could be!

But of her doubts and studies she said nothing to Vandeleur, from a tender feeling of wishing to save him the sorrow of knowing that his love was killing her soul, and he remained in ignorance of the plague spot that was spreading over her once pure heart. He saw her more cheerful, more bright, and, if possible, more loving; and he asked no more.

Time speeded on—London again was full, and rife with all the hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, struggles and envy of the mighty Babylon—the wheel of fashion was again in motion, and universal hurry and bustle prevailed in the great human hive.

All our old acquaintance had re-assembled,

and Lord and Lady Gaveston had taken possession of their house in Mayfair, accompanied by a very important personage whose chief feature to all but its happy mother, was a large cockade.

Mrs. Greville was once more settled in Lowndes Square, her heart full of the one earthly joy to her, that of seeing Vandeleur every day. He was her world—her all.

It is sad to record such love—sad to tell that such intensity of feeling was bestowed where it was a sin to bestow it. But, reader, I am telling you a true story ; for inventing requires a talent I do not possess, and I repeat here the motto on my title page—

"Je me contente de raconter,"

and may the recital serve as a warning to show that unlawful love—no matter how deep and true and fervent it may be—is sure to be despised sooner or later, and the victim, after a time cast aside like a soiled glove, or put away with an indifference scarce less galling.

But in the hey-day of passion men and women will both deny this. *Ask them, a few years later, what they think.*

As soon as Vandeleur heard of Eveline's

arrival in town, he hastened to her. Their few days' separation had seemed an age to him.

She flew into the arms opened to receive her, and gazing in his face with an intensity of feeling no language can describe, exclaimed, in Imoinda's words—

> "Oh! this separation
> Has made you dearer if it can be so
> Than ever you were to me; you appear
> Like a kind star to my benighted steps,
> To guide my way to happiness!"

She had a happy memory, and her ready adaptation of others' words when her own were weak to express her feelings, gave much piquancy and charm to her conversation, and no one was more susceptible of this charm than Vandeleur, who now kissed the sweet lips which spoke such loving welcome.

The weeks flew by, they meeting with a reckless disregard of the world's opinion, which entailed the natural consequence. The world began to talk, but Mrs. Greville was rich and popular—gave the most *récherché* little dinners in London—organised the pleasantest parties of the season, and last, not least, stood very high in the estimation of those whom the breath of scandal could not touch—a combina-

tion which makes a very substantial cloak, but the world is a hot-bed in which the least seed of scandal fertilizes with a rapidity worthy of the tropics, especially when a spiteful woman sees to its culture.

The door-bell at Mrs. Greville's house rang one evening somewhat late, and a colloquy ensued in the hall.

"Is Mrs. Greville at home?"

"No," was the audacious answer.

"How can you say so, fellow, when the windows are all lighted up?"

"Well, missus has company, it's all the same," replied the footman, who perhaps knew more of Eveline's affairs than she was aware of; but she was a kind and generous mistress, and servants know when they are well off, and Vandeleur's very liberal tips for calling cabs on rainy days, and other small services, were not without their value; so it was with something approaching insolence with which the footman replied to a visitor, whom instinct more than aught else told him was no friend of Mrs. Greville's, "nor a lady, for the matter of that," he thought, as he barred her way.

"Mrs. Greville will see *me*, she expects me. I have come by appointment."

The footman stared, but offered no further opposition, and the lady brushing by him, ran upstairs and opened the drawing-room door before he could pass her.

Eveline, who had been sitting on a footstool at Vandeleur's feet, rose quietly to hers as the door opened, and bowing haughtily to her unexpected guest, asked what had procured her the pleasure of her visit.

"He! he! he! I fear I am intruding, but at this *late* hour I hoped to find you alone."

"My *friends* never intrude," said Mrs. Greville, with marked emphasis, and a lofty haughtiness that would have done no discredit to her grandfather; "but I was not aware that I had the honour of counting Miss Wilson among them. Pray be seated," and Eveline herself sat down on a sofa with the air of an empress, and calmly regarded Miss Wilson, who was taken rather aback.

"Mr. Vandeleur, will you tell Lady Wrexham how much pleasure I have in being of any service to her, and that she may certainly count on me to-morrow? I will not say adieu, as we shall meet at L—— House."

The change, from stately displeasure to one of bewitching grace, was inimitable.

"If that woman who has just gone up

questions you about your mistress's affairs, the less you say the better," said Vandeleur to the footman below, who, pocketing a sovereign, touched his forehead, and replied—

"All right, sir."

"I am at your service, Miss Wilson," said Mrs. Greville, as the door closed on Vandeleur. "I suppose a matter of some importance has procured me this pleasure."

Very coldly she spoke, but without the least indication of sarcasm.

Miss Wilson, who had come in with flying colours, found herself at a disadvantage; she had not been prepared for this imperturbable scorn, and she stammered forth—

"Oh! nothing very particular—at least not to you; but seeing lights in your windows, I thought I should so like to see you to ask after *dear* Lady Okehampton;" and regaining her *aplomb*, she continued more glibly, "I dare say you know that his lordship and I have had a little tiff—he! he! he!—and I can't well *quite* go to the house."

Mrs. Greville gave a slight and silent inclination of her head, notifying that she was attending, and waited to hear what else Miss Wilson had to communicate, but apparently she had not much more to impart, for looking round,

she said, patronisingly, "What a charming room! so pretty, so natty, and *such* flowers! Do you know I am afraid I drove away your friend; I am *so* sorry."

"If you have nothing more important to tell me, I must wish you good evening, for I am going out, and I have to dress," said Eveline, rising.

"I can wait, and perhaps you will put me down on the way," suggested Miss Wilson.

"I regret being unable to accommodate you, as the Duchess of Montserrat calls for me," said Mrs. Greville in a tone of freezing politeness (she knew somewhat of Miss Wilson's good offices towards her); "but I will order a cab for you."

Miss Wilson was compelled to leave, and having so signally failed in her attack on Mrs. Greville, she proceeded to interrogate the footman.

"I am glad to see your mistress so well," she began; "had Mr. Vandeleur been here long?" and she slipped a shilling in his hand.

"Well, miss," said the footman, consulting a large silver watch, "he'd been here exactly five minutes and three quarters when you came."

"Dear me, I thought he was dining here?"

"No, miss, not as I am aweer of."

"Surely I saw the shadow of two people at dinner when I passed here an hour ago?"

"Missus had her old governess to dine with her; p'raps it was *her* shadder you saw. Where to, miss?" said the footman, shutting the cab door.

"All right, cabby!" he cried, giving the direction.

The footman made an irreverent gesture with hand and nose as Miss Wilson drove away.

Miss Wilson went about sighing and whispering her surmises about Mrs. Greville and Mr. Vandeleur, and as a drop begins the huge stalagmite, so did her words beget the stone that was to be flung at the woman she hated.

"Suspicion soon overturns what Confidence builds," and people began to look shy at Eveline Greville.

CHAPTER XXII.

"As soon go kindle fire with snow,
As seek to quench the fire of love with words."
SHAKESPEARE.

A FEW weeks had passed on. Eveline was sitting with Lady Gaveston, the future heir of all the Pierrepoints on her lap. The little thing crowed and laughed in her face, and she bent down and kissed it, saying—

"How I envy you this darling! What a happiness he must be to you, Pamela," and Eveline sighed.

"Well, I do like him a little," replied Pamela, kneeling down to get nearer the tiny face, on which she gazed with happy fondness; "I never thought till I had him how fond I could be of a baby," and thereon followed accounts of the wonderful exploits of this baby among babies, till the nurse came to carry him off.

Lady Gaveston had heard rumours about Eveline—rumours which she had indignantly refuted—but which had caused her no small uneasiness.

For some time she had been wishing for an opportunity of speaking to her about these reports, but now that one occurred, she shrank from a task which nothing but her great friendship for Eveline would have induced her to undertake. And this latter seemed so dispirited, so cast down, that it made her still more unwilling to say a word that could pain her.

"He is indeed a treasure to me," she said, alluding to her boy. "Ah! Eveline, how I wish you would marry! What makes you so cruel to every man who asks you?"

"Not found my hero yet, I suppose," she answered, lightly.

"*Bien sûre, ma mie?*" said Pamela, tenderly. "Do you remember what you told me two years ago?"

"A great many things, I dare say. What does your ladyship especially allude to?" said Eveline, bantering.

"My ladyship alludes to a promise you made of consulting me before deciding on your idol."

"What idol? I have no idol," said Eveline, nervously.

"I am very glad to hear you say so, dear," said Pamela, but feeling that the first shot had told, she rose and drew her friend's head against her bosom; "and yet why are you so persistent in refusing such men as I know have asked you to marry them? Is there *no* cause, Eveline?"

Lady Gaveston paused for an answer, but none came, and stroking her friend's head caressingly, she continued, very earnestly, though with no little nervousness, for it is an awkward matter that of telling one's friend that the world is busy with her fair fame—

"Eveline, you know how very dear you are to me"—Pamela was startled to feel Eveline's frame jarring against her with the heavy throbbing of her heart; she could not see her face, and she was glad she could not—"and you know that I would not say one word to pain you unnecessarily, but you are too young, too beautiful, to do many things which others, less gifted, might do with impunity, and I cannot bear to hear you blamed."

"Blamed?" repeated the other, though not lifting her head.

"Yes; they say you receive men—*one man* —too often."

It was out at last, and Pamela's heart was scarcely less agitated than the one which throbbed against her.

"Go on. What more do they say?"

"Do not speak like that, dear Eveline. That hard, unkind voice is scarcely like you. I grant you that it is hard to find the world ready to put an evil construction on innocent, and even kindly actions; but the world *is* ill-natured, especially to a beautiful woman who has no man to protect her. If you would but give that right to some one! Eveline, do you not know how Lorton loves you? He has been abroad for months, simply because he loves you, and, he fears, hopelessly. One word would recall him—so gladly! Will you not give him the right to protect you?"

"Protect me? Against what?" asked Eveline, in a low voice.

"Against yourself, darling — against the world's evil tongue. Forgive me, Eveline, but people say that Mr. Vandeleur is a great deal too much at your house."

"It is false!" cried Eveline, passionately; "I have not seen him for four days."

There was a piteous wail in her voice which

went straight to Pamela's heart. She knelt down and drew Eveline in her arms.

"My child! has it come to this?" said she, pitifully.

The womanly sympathy opened the floodgates of Eveline's heart, and she lay sobbing on her friend's bosom. Four days, and not even a line from him! her heart was breaking. For a few moments she was unable to restrain her tears, but the terror of betraying herself —she who had so much to hide—brought back her self-control. She gently disengaged herself from Pamela's embrace, and dried her eyes.

"Don't kneel, dear Pamela, you will hurt yourself. I hardly know what has come over me, I am so weak and nervous. What was I saying? oh, that I had not seen Mr. Vandeleur lately. So people say he calls on me too often. It is a pity people cannot mind their own affairs."

"People never do when there is a chance of settling those of their neighbours," said Lady Gaveston, a trifle less tenderly, for she was hurt at Eveline's rejecting her sympathy and withholding her confidence.

How little did she know what that confidence would have divulged! Her worst fear

was that perhaps Eveline, with a romantic friendship for one who was not over happy at home, was allowing him too much licence in coming to her house at all hours; and in a kindly, but unwise sympathy for him, was not sufficiently mindful of the construction that the world would put on such a friendship—a friendship which Lady Gaveston had thought fraught with more danger to him than to Eveline, till the sudden tears of this latter awoke more serious alarms; but not in her wildest dreams would she have imagined the awful truth.

"I am sure it never occurred to you that any one could imagine you would encourage a married man, or that a kindly friendship could be so interpreted; but these friendships *are* dangerous—I do not say to *you*. But has it never occurred to you that you are very charming, and that Mr. Vandeleur is not particularly happy in his marriage? Do not let a married man fall in love with you, Eveline," pursued Pamela, with great earnestness. "I have seen it often enough—seen the bitter consequence—the misery that falls on all—the man, his wife, but worst of all on the one who, after all, is most to be pitied; for I take it, no woman would wilfully love a married

man and bring on herself utter wretchedness; and not only wretchedness, but disgrace, Eveline; disgrace that nothing can wipe out, that no after years of repentance can blot out on earth; disgrace that makes a pure woman shudder even to think of—that she would die rather than encounter, and which turns her into what she loathes and hates."

The truth, though known to ourselves, is often harder to bear when we hear the utterance of our own conscience spoken aloud by a fellow creature.

Pamela marked the shudder, the tightening hands and lips; and with loving pity she continued—

"And yet the best of women may be on the brink of such love—for love comes unknown to us, like a thief in the dark, and not at our own bidding—but she can draw back in time, and save, not only herself, but the man. Think you what Mr. Vandeleur's home would be if his wife were to know he loved you. It is not over happy *now;* but *then* it would be miserable, and through *you.* Not a pleasant retrospection for a friend who simply sought to cast a few flowers in his path. I will not insult you by supposing that you could accept such love; but women have done

so, and only to see that the men to whom they have given all that makes life dear and lovely, are the very first to turn from them in indifference."

A soft smile stole over Eveline's face. She had sacrificed all to Vandeleur, it was true, was unworthy any woman's esteem; but *he* would never be indifferent to her—Oh! no; and she unconsciously shook her head and smiled in her perfect trust of him.

Lady Gaveston not unnaturally misconstrued the smile and the gesture into those of *self-trust* and conscious innocence. She was greatly re-assured, and half angry with herself for having given so severe a lecture to one who did not deserve it; so resuming her own natural cheeriness, she said—

"If I have trespassed on a friend's prerogative, forgive me. My affection must plead for my forgetting the proverb: 'Liebe deinen Nachbar reiss aber den Zaun nicht ein.'"

Eveline by this time was fully mistress of herself again.

"I might say, 'Rathe Niemand ungebeten,' but I will not; for I know that kindness alone dictated words as painful for you to utter, as for me to hear. Besides, I am really obliged to you for putting me on my guard against

gossip, which, if I am not mistaken, has arisen from Miss Wilson. She has, I am fully aware, for a long time past been very busy with my affairs. She did me the honour of calling one evening; Mr. Vandeleur happened to be with me, and knowing Miss Wilson as I now do, I did *not* receive her very cordially."

That one sin leads on to another is a trite enough remark, but it is one that strikes us afresh as we contemplate the gradual moral descent of any human being.

A short time back Eveline Greville would have shrunk from the spirit of untruth which pervaded the above speech, but which fell so easily from her lips now.

Says Rochefoucauld, "Nous sommes si accoutumés à nous déguiser aux autres qu'enfin nous nous déguisons à nous mêmes."

"A most dangerous woman, as I long ago told you," replied Lady Gaveston, only too glad to think, as she did, that ill-nature alone had given rise to damaging reports; "and double reason why you should be very careful. Promise me, dear, that you will put a stop to the frequency of Mr. Vandeleur's visits. Depend upon it, no woman can receive with impunity the daily visits of one man. The world will talk, and with Miss Wilson to

back it, there is *nothing* it will not say. And now, dry those poor eyes—I never meant to call forth all those tears—and come and see my boy; he looks such a cherub when he is asleep."

The two women embraced each other cordially, and Eveline said, almost with a sigh of envy—

"How happy you seem to be!"

"And *am*. I love my husband, and I love my boy. Depend upon it, home ties and affections form our right sphere; they bring out our better nature, and teach us a higher wisdom, and make us see things in a truer and more feminine light than—at all events, *I* did," said Lady Gaveston, honestly.

"You are one in a thousand," said Eveline, warmly.

"Not a bit of it," replied the other, laughing; "but I am very happy, and not the less so for knowing that I am necessary to my husband's happiness; and so I try to be the best I can be, for his sake and his child's sake. Eveline, how I wish *you* were married!"

"So do *I*, often, Pamela. I can well fancy that there is no greater, purer happiness than yours."

"Then why cast it from you? I will not

speak of my brother, but there is that dear, good fellow, Frank Lovell, who is continually here, simply to hear about you. I have grown quite fond of him, though he is a shocking thief. There is not a thing you give me that I can keep, and he brings me back duplicates in the simplest manner; and as for photographs, he must have a gallery of yours by this time! He stole a handkerchief that you left behind you the other day. It was lying on the table with your *chiffre* uppermost, and smelling of violets, a perfume that always hangs about you. My back was turned, but I saw him in the glass. He took it up, kissed it, and put it inside his waistcoat—in his bosom, I suppose *he* would say. I turned on him, and taxed him with the theft—the thing had lace worth a guinea a yard round it. 'Let me have it,' said he, in a voice that made me choke, and I am not given that way. Why can't you love that man? He is true as steel."

"I dare say he is, and I am very sorry for him; but you must find him another wife. As for me, I think my heart must be like a nether millstone."

"I think it is," said Pamela.

"I sometimes wonder why I was born," said Eveline, wearily.

"To break men's hearts, Mr. Lovell would say."

"Let us go and look at your boy," was Eveline's answer.

So they went up to the nursery, and then Lady Gaveston's carriage being announced, she asked Eveline to drive with her.

Eveline was so terrified by her friend's lecture, which for the first time opened her eyes to the fact that the world was busy with her name, that she strove to rally her spirits from the depression into which they had been cast by Vandeleur's absence and silence during the last four days. She succeeded so far as to completely deceive her friend into the belief that illness alone had been the cause of her "lowness" in the morning.

When Lady Gaveston took Eveline home, she got out of the carriage with her, and as they stood in the hall, she exclaimed—

"What a heap of cards; and Miss Wilson's among the number!"

The servants being present, she took the opportunity of rendering her friend a service.

"Do you mean to say," she exclaimed, "that you admit this odious woman? None of *us* receive her, and I advise you not to do so."

"I do not like her," said Eveline.

"Nobody does," replied Lady Gaveston, dryly. "If Miss Wilson calls again," she added, speaking to the footman and butler, "remember—Mrs. Greville is not at home."

"I told Miss Wilson so to-day, my lady; but she would go upstairs and wait. She said Mrs. Greville expected her."

"Did you expect her?" asked Pamela.

"Most emphatically, no," replied Eveline.

"The insolence of the woman!" exclaimed the other; then, addressing the servants, she added—

"If ever she calls again, tell her that Mrs. Greville does not wish to see her, and that it is by mine and Lord Okehampton's express desire. She is an awful woman, Eveline. Adieu; of course we meet to-night at my mother's."

Eveline looked at the cards, and saw one of Vandeleur's!

"Mr. Vandeleur called twice, ma'am, and he wanted to see you very particular, and would call on his way to dinner. I told him the carriage was ordered a quarter to eight, and he said he would be here a few minutes before."

Utterly oblivious of her promise to Pamela,

Eveline only thought of the joy of seeing him again, and hurried off to her toilette.

She was scarcely dressed, when his well-known ring fell on her ears. She rushed down, and, regardless of her *ruches* and trimmings, threw herself in his arms as though she had not seen him for years, kissing his hands, his clothes, in an ecstasy of joy.

"What is it, silly one?" said he, fondly. "Not a bad plan, keeping away a day or two for the sake of such a welcome."

"A day or two! It is four days, every minute; I have nearly died of it."

"You look very lovely for a dying woman," said he, kissing her flushed cheek.

"Oh! don't be cruel. You do not know what I have gone through. What kept you away?"

"I will tell you to-morrow. Look what you have done," and he pointed to the remains of his decapitated bouquet.

"Good gracious! there is eight o'clock striking," exclaimed Eveline, as she replaced the damaged bouquet by one deftly arranged with her white fingers. "Run, run for your life! Where are you dining?"

"At Treherne's—a bachelor party. And you?"

"At Challenor's, and to Lady Okehampton's after. Are you going?"

"No. I wish I were going to dine here with you. You have not asked me for ages."

"Why did you not come to be asked?" she playfully retorted.

"May I come to-morrow, early?"

"Oh! do. I have so much to tell you—I am so miserable."

"You look it," said he, laughing.

"I must go. Put me in the carriage," said Eveline.

"To-morrow, then, at eleven," said he, leaning in at the window of her brougham; and Eveline drove off to her dinner-party with a light heart.

She had seen him; the mist had cleared away. The sun shone out with greater splendour than before; and Pamela, Miss Wilson, the world, were all forgotten.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Amicus certus in re incerta cernitur."

ENNIUS.

CHALLENOR had risen very high in his public career, and now held a seat in the Cabinet. If a stern, he was considered a safe man, one whose feelings would never influence his head, and whose calm unimpassioned intellect might always be relied on. How little his colleagues knew him! but in the occupation of public life, his thoughts were far too much engaged in more serious matters to have time to dwell on the one mad passion of his life, which he now kept down by an iron will. Still there were times when his heart would tell him who reigned there supreme; and one touch of a fairy hand—one smile from a pair of lovely lips—would shatter his will to pieces.

Is love ever crushed out? I trow not. We may keep the eye silent—the tongue in sub-

jection—may hide all outward sign of the inward fire—but unless it dies a natural death it is only kept alive by the very efforts we use to extinguish it. It may be that we are not often reminded of its existence, but ever and anon

"There comes a token like a scorpion's sting,"

which brings back "remembrance with all its busy train," and Challenor was no exception to the rule. The sight of her unhinged him for days; but the only outward difference it made in him was, that he was more than usually absorbed in his work—colder and sterner in carrying it out.

Mrs. Greville did not often dine at the Challenors, but when she did she was warmly welcomed by the guests, for dinners there were rather of a solemn nature, and the elements political rather than *spirituelle;* so the advent of a young, lovely, bright, clever woman, was hailed with pleasure. Never had she been more sparkling, more full of playful repartee, than this evening, and her lively badinage challenged gray-headed ministers, and brought smiles and laughter to many a wrinkled brow.

It was the joyous rebound after four days'

suspense and fear; she was like a bird let out of captivity, fluttering her wings in the sunshine. But it did not last long. Later in the evening, at Lady Okehampton's soirée, her eyes fell on Pamela.

Slowly dropping on her brain, like drops of fire, came the warning words that Pamela had spoken to her that morning.

"Disgrace, dishonour, shunned by all, a thing to loathe, the world busy with her fair name."

It was horrible! was it coming to this? she so courted—so admired? It needed but one word to blow the fabric to the winds. The light died out of her face as she contemplated the possibility of all the fair phantasmagoria before her, crumbling to dust and ashes. She glanced furtively round, half fearful of seeing that already the prophecy was being fulfilled.

Surely Lady Georgina Vyse had bowed very distantly! and that haughty Mrs. Somerset had actually cut her! Her blood curdling, she made her way through the crowd and saw a lady talking to the Duchess of Montserrat, who, to her imagination, looked sad and stern, while her companion seemed to glance at her, Mrs. Greville, as she spoke. Were they condemning her? Her trembling

knees could hardly uphold her, and she gladly took possession of a vacant seat near her; the crowd closed round, and she was soon out of sight.

Meantime a very different scene was enacting in another part of the room. Two ladies were talking.

"I hear she is a sad flirt—flirts with married men, too."

"That is a pity," said the other lady, more good-naturedly, "but there is safety in multitudes, you know."

"Well, I don't like to be scandalous, but Miss Wilson does say—" and an ominous pursing up of the lips finished the sentence.

The other raised her eyebrows and leaned towards the speaker, to catch the whisper, and then said—

"What a pity she does not marry."

"I am not sure that any man would marry her. I hear she has tried hard to marry the Duke of Montserrat's son, but the duchess would not hear of it."

A lady, who happened to be near them, turned her head as the name Montserrat caught her ear.

"I do not know the Montserrats," replied the second lady, "nor Mrs. Greville either,

but I have heard it was a marriage that they would have liked."

"I assure you, you are wrong. I know for a fact that Lord Plantagenet was sent out of the way last year by the duchess, who was afraid of his being entangled. Miss Wilson, who knows the duchess well, told me so."

"I think you are in error," said a calm, haughty voice. "I happen to know that Mrs. Greville is a very dear friend of the Duke and Duchess of Montserrat's."

"My dear madam," said the lady who had spoken last, "I assure you it is no such thing. Miss Wilson—an intimate friend of the duchess—told me she had long given her up."

"Really? Will you tell Miss—Wilson I think you called her—" said the unknown lady, with a very slow enunciation, so that not a syllable was lost, "I was not aware that I had the honour of her acquaintance. *I* am the Duchess of Montserrat," and she sailed superbly away.

Had a shell exploded at their feet, the effect could hardly have been greater. Utterly routed, the well-informed lady made her escape, furious with Miss Wilson for having brought her into such "an awkward business," as she

afterwards termed it, while the other rather enjoyed her friend's discomfiture. "Il y a dans les malheurs de nos amis quelque chose qui ne nous est pas tout-à-fait désagréable."

"Here you are," said Lady Gaveston, "if my mother had not told me that you had made your bow, I would not have believed you were here. Why are you in hiding like this? come with me." She took Eveline's arm, and added, as they traversed the room, "I am afraid my lecture this morning was too severe; come and show yourself. Everybody is asking after you. Always bring a brave front to the battle, and disarm your enemies. Might to the right."

Lady Gaveston was a true friend, and knowing that the world was busy about Mrs. Greville, and that the greenest wood makes the most smoke, unless it be at once extinguished, she determined to show the world that the best people in it gave no credence to the ill-natured reports afloat; and she somewhat ostentatiously walked about with Eveline, stopping to talk with every one worth talking to, who happened to be there, while Eveline felt like a criminal going to execution.

"Let us find the Duchess of Montserrat, and do you stay by her till I come or send for

you. I have been telling her of the Wilson intrigue—all owing to Mr. Digby—poor Mr. Digby! *did* you refuse him?—and there has been the grandest scene! I wish I had been there! It appears that Miss Wilson had been taking her name in vain, and claiming her friendship—announcing her grace's sentiments, &c., &c., whereupon the duchess, with her inimitable look of—not contempt—it is less than that—but as if brushing a speck of dust from off her spotless gloves, replied, 'that she had not the honour of knowing Miss Wilson, even by sight.' I would have given anything to have seen it."

And thus rattling on, they made their way to an inner room.

"Here is the truant, playing hide-and-seek. Take care of her, duchess, for she has been hard to find."

The duchess, who had a horror of idle gossip, had not so much as heard of any rumours concerning Eveline.

Lady Gaveston had not mentioned Vandeleur's name to her, but had only told her of Miss Wilson's long-standing spite against their favourite, and that she had been spreading injurious reports about her; this coming immediately after the conversation she had

overheard, the duchess took it for granted that the reports were in connection with her son, so she was, if possible, more than usually cordial in her greeting.

This confidence on the part of her friends stung Eveline as no reproaches could have done. To be thus received—thus trusted at the first word of censure—was almost more than she could bear, and she said to herself that such trust should no longer be abused—she would leave the world—return to her Welsh hills, and shunning all society, live henceforth for him alone.

The thought of breaking with him never once occurred to her. His love had become too much part of her existence to think of relinquishing it. He was her *all* now. Religion, peace, fair name, all had been given up, and *he* only remained to her; but she resolved that this should be the last time she would impose on the credulity of her friends, and, thinking thus, her manner unconsciously became inexpressibly tender as she paid them the silent homage of a grateful heart.

Like a weather-cock is the world's verdict. Seeing the wind blow from the highest and most unimpeachable quarters, it at once veered round; and Mrs. Greville, so lately

condemned, was now declared to be the most modest and charming of her sex.

Eveline and Pamela were in the cloak-room waiting for their carriages, and the former, her heart swelling with remorse and gratitude, caught Lady Gaveston's hand to her lips with a look that, in after days, Pamela often thought of and understood; but which then made her wonder how any eyes could be so eloquent. Gratitude, remorse, affection, entreaty for pity, all blended in that one quick regard.

At the time she only smiled, and as they drove home she said to her husband,

"What marvellous eyes Eveline Greville has!"

"I like yours better," said he.

"*Ca va sans dire, monsieur;* but hers are *wonderful.*"

"She is very pretty—perhaps the prettiest woman I ever saw; but to my mind there is something—I hardly know what it is—not quite square."

"What do you mean?" asked his wife quickly.

"Well, it is hard to define. I don't see why she need look so grateful; for, after all, a Gaveston is as good as any one else."

"And sometimes better," said his wife, slipping her hand into his; "but I think I can account for that. I gave her rather a severe lecture this morning on her imprudence in giving the world scope for scandal."

"And made up for it afterwards, I see."

"I wish, dear, you would talk to Mr. Vandeleur. He is a great deal too often at her house, and you might tell him so. I have spoken to her."

"Women do these things, I believe; but men don't like interfering with each other in such matters. Besides, it would do no earthly good—rather the contrary."

"Shall I speak to him?" said Pamela. "I don't in the least mind."

"I don't think you do," said her husband, quietly; "you would walk into a hornet's nest, and, 'not in the least mind.'"

"So would you to save a friend."

"Suppose one did not save him? Take my advice, Pam," said Lord Gaveston, in a more serious tone than he had hitherto used, "don't interfere with Vandeleur. Say what you like to her—women understand each other, I suppose—but leave him alone."

"You do not think——" and Pamela stopped.

"I think nothing, dear, except that you are the best and truest woman in the world; and if any one could prevent another going to the devil, you would. Here we are at home."

And Eveline had "gone to the devil,' as men express it, long ago.

END OF VOL. II.

BILLING, PRINTER, GUILDFORD, SURREY.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 056517342